

(3.) Even this disgraceful uncomfortable captivity God intended for their benefit, and we are sure his intentions are never frustrated, *I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good*. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations, and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so in the issue as to many of them; *Out of the eater came forth meat*. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the hand of God, weaned from the world, made serious, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry, and thus it was good for them that they were afflicted, Psalm cix. 67—71.

(4.) God promiseth them that he will own them in their captivity; though they seem abandoned, they shall be acknowledged; their scornful relations they left behind will scarce own them, or their kindred to them, but God saith, *I will acknowledge them*. Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and sword shall not separate them from his love.

(5.) God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, ver. 6. Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but as when the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, 1. He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage, so will I set mine eyes upon them for good, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it. 2. He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done: *I will bring them again to this land*. They were sent abroad for improvement awhile, under a severe discipline; but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Father's house. 3. He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he will build them, and make them a habitation for himself, will plant them, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was to square the rough stones and make them fit for his building, to prune up the young trees and make them fit for his planting.

(6.) He engaged to prepare them for these temporal mercies he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, ver. 7. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure they will end well. Now that which is promised is, 1. That they should be better acquainted with God; they should learn more of God by his providences in Babylon, than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem: thanks to divine grace, for it that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have forgotten God. It is here promised, *I will give them*, not so much a head to know me, but a heart to know me, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections: *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, Psalm cxi. 10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance. 2. That they should be entirely converted to God: to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end; *they shall return to me with their whole heart*. God himself undertakes for them that they shall, and if he turn us we shall be turned. This follows upon the former: for those that have a heart to know God aright, will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God. 3. That thus they should be again taken into covenant with God, as much to their comfort as ever: *They shall be my people and I will be their God*. God will own them, as formerly, for his people, both in the discoveries of himself to them, his acceptance of their services, and his gracious appearances on their behalf; and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have backslidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, and that afflictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant-love.

2. Here is the moral of the bad figs, Zedekiah, and his princes, and partizans, yet remain in the land, proud and secure enough, Ezek. xi. 3. Many were fled into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted, that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now as to both these that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatened,

1. That whereas those that were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity; these should be dispersed and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they should have no joy one of another.

2. That whereas those were carried captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries for their hurt. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them, that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him.

3. That whereas those would have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind; *In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb*. Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew; such a one as poor and miserable as a Jew. All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamities brought upon them.

4. That whereas those should return to their own land, these shall be consumed from that land, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead, it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of their obedience.

5. That whereas those were reserved for better times, these were reserved for worse: wherever they are removed, the sword, and famine, and pestilence, shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice, and those that have escaped one may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation; yet because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable this has a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of; but those that continued obstinate in unbelief, were driven into all countries for a taunt and a curse, and so they remain to this day.

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not placed in the exact order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furbished. Here is, 1. A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years last past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them, ver. 1—7. 2. A very express threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God and their continuance in sin, ver. 8—11. To which is annexed, a promise of their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after seventy years, ver. 12, 13, 14. 3. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations round about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a cup of fury put into their hands, ver. 15—28. By a sword sent among them, ver. 29—33. And a desolation sent among the shepherds and their flocks and pastures, ver. 34—38. So that we have here judgment beginning at the house of God, but not ending there.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day (that is the three and twentieth year) the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: 6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah, ver. 1. which Jeremiah delivered in his name unto all the people of Judah, ver. 2. Note, That which is of universal concern, ought to be of universal cognizance: It is fit the word that is concerning all the people, as the word of God is, the word of the gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and, as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the house of the king, chap. xxi. 1. and he took the courage to deliver his message there; here he is sent to all the people, and he takes the pains to deliver his message to them, probably, when they were all come up to Jerusalem, to worship at some of the solemn feasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, they would be well disposed to hear counsel and receive instruction.

This prophecy is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and first of Nebuchadrezzar: it was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's third year that Nebuchadrezzar began to reign himself alone (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father) as appears Dan. i. 1. but Jehoiakim's fourth year was begun before Nebuchadrezzar's first was completed. Now that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master: God, by his prophet, gives notice that he is his servant, and what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the government of the world. Nebuchadrezzar should not bid so fair for universal monarchy (I should have said universal tyranny) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him. In the execution of which the world shall see the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness.

Now in this message we may observe,

1. The great pains that had been taken with this people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and a justification of God in his proceedings against them.

(1.) Jeremiah, for his part, had been a constant preacher among them twenty-three years, so that he prophesied about eighteen or nineteen years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoahaz, and now four years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. *These three years* (these three and twenty years) *have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree*: All this while, 1. God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them. From that time, to this very day, the word of the Lord has come unto me, for your use. Though they had the substance of the warning sent them already in the book of Moses, yet because those were not duly regarded and applied, God sent to enforce them and make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, Gen. vi. 3. 2. Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering these messages; he could appeal to themselves, as well as to God and his own conscience, concerning this: *I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking*. He had declared to them the whole counsel of God; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his trust, in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about and intent upon, they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates, that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up betimes to project which way he might take that would be most likely to do them good. He rose early, both because

he would lose no time, and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate, Christ came early in the morning, to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, *Luke xxi. 38.* Morning lectures have their advantages: *My voice shall thou hear in the morning.*

(2.) Besides him God had sent them other prophets, on the same errand, *ver. 4.* of the writing prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk were a little before him, and Zephaniah cotemporary with him. But, beside those, there were many other of God's servants the prophets that preached awakening sermons, which were never published. And here God himself is said to *rise early* and *send them*; intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that this people should *turn and live* and not go on and die, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11.*

(3.) All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purpose, *ver. 5, 6.* 1. They all told them of their faults, *their evil way*, and the *evil of their doings*. Those were not of God's sending, who flattered them as if there were nothing amiss among them. 2. They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God; *their going after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them*; gods that were the work of their own hands. 3. They all called on them to repent of their sins, and to reform their lives. This was the burden of every song, *Turn ye now every one from his evil way.* Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to a national deliverance; every one must turn from his own evil way. The street will not be clean unless every one sweep before his own door. 4. They all assured them, that, if they did so, it would certainly be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them, *you shall dwell in the land, dwell at ease, dwell in peace*, in this good land, which the Lord has given you and your fathers. Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it. The judgments they feared should be prevented; *provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt.* Note, We should never receive from God the evil punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causeth grief to us unless we give offence to him.

(4.) Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively affectionate preacher, yet they *hearkened not* to him, *ver. 3.* The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they *hearken to them*, nor *incline their ear*, *ver. 4.* That very particular sin which they were told, of all other, was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they wilfully persisted in: you *provoke me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.* Note, What is a provocation to God, will prove, in the end, hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it: *O Israel, that thou hast destroyed thyself!*

8 ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts: Because ye have not heard my words, 9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. 11. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words, which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompence them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge. *Because you have not heard my words*, I must take another course with you, *ver. 8.* Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth, they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to bear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin or perish in it. Wrath comes without remedy against those only that sin without repentance. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them, as their not returning.

1. The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armies is here decreed, *ver. 9.* God sent them his servants the prophets, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for his servant the king of Babylon, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets. Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other God will be heeded, and will make men know that he is the Lord. Nebuchadrezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, an enemy to him, and afterwards a rival with him, yet in the descent he made upon this country he was God's servant, accomplished his purpose; was employed by him, and was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore doth God here call himself, *The Lord of hosts*, *ver. 8.* for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion, not only over the inhabitants, but over the armies of this earth, of which he makes what use he pleaseth. He hath them all at his command: the most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants; Nebuchadrezzar, that is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant, as Cyrus that is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made desolate, God here musters his army that is to do it, gathers them together, takes all the families of the north, if there be occasion for them, leads them on as their commander in chief, brings them against this land, gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but against all the nations round about,

that there might be no dependance upon them as allies or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is here described, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* it shall be total, the whole land shall be a desolation; not only desolate, but a desolation itself, both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of: it shall be lasting, even perpetual desolations; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it perpetual. This desolation shall be the ruin of their credit among their neighbours; it shall bury their honour in the dust, shall make them an astonishment and a hissing: every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with a just disgrace, for deserting a God that would have been their protection, for impostors that would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be a final period of all their joy; *I will take them from the voice of mirth*, hang their harps on the willow-trees, and put them out of tune for songs. *I will take from them the voice of mirth*, they shall neither have cause for it, nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore the voice of mirth shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of food, the sound of the millstones shall not be heard, for when the enemy hath seized their stores, the sound of the grinding must needs be low, *Eccles. xii. 4.* An end shall be put to all business, there shall not be seen the light of a candle, for there shall be no work to be done worth candle-light. And lastly, they shall be deprived of their liberty, *those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.* The fixing of the time how long the captivity shall last, would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity, and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, *Dan. ix. 2.* Nay, God himself had an eye to it, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.* for therefore he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished: *known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world*; which appears by this, that when he has thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets, and by them to his church.

2. The ruin of Babylon at last is here likewise foretold, as it had been long before by Isaiah, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire when the correcting work is done with it. This shall be done when seventy years are accomplished, for the destruction of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these seventy years commence; some date them from the captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiachin, and first of Nebuchadrezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after: I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon, and because usually God had taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the four hundred years servitude in Egypt. And if so, eighteen or nineteen years of the seventy were run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the set time in favour of Zion is come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the influences of his tyranny reckoned for: then that nation shall be punished for their iniquity, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must be a perpetual desolation, such as they had made other lands; for the judge of all the earth will both do right, and avenge wrong, as King of nations, and King of saints. Let proud conquerors and oppressors be moderate in the use of their power and success, for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer: their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had, (1.) To what God had said, *I will bring upon that land all my words*; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of divine predictions, and all its power broken, rather than one iota or title of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans, foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, *ver. 13.* It is with reference to this very event that God saith, *ver. 26.* he will confirm the word of his servant, and perform the counsel of his messengers, *Isa. xlv. 26.* (2.) To what they had done, *ver. 14.* *I will recompence them according to their deeds*, by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to serve them, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable: but now the measure of their iniquity is full, many nations and great kings, that are in alliance with, and come into the assistance of Cyrus king of Persia, shall serve themselves of them also, shall make themselves masters of their country, and enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of an universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers. *He that leudeth into captivity shall go into captivity.*

15. ¶ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. 16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. 17. Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me: 18. To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse (as it is this day.) 19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; 20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Askelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, 21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the king of the isles which are beyond the sea, 23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, 24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, 25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Edom, and all the kings of the Medes, 26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon

upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. 27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. 28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink. 29. For lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadrezzar, who just now began to reign and act, was to be the instrument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The cup in the vision is to be a sword in the accomplishment of it: so it is explained, *ver. 16.* it is the sword that I will send among them, the sword of war that should be irresistibly strong and implacably cruel. Observe,

1. Whence this destroying sword should come: *from the hand of God*: it is the sword of the Lord, *Jer. xlvii. 6.* *bathed in heaven*, *Isa. xxxiv. 5.* Wicked men are made use of as his sword, *Psal. xvii. 13.* It is the wine-cup of his fury. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment; the nations have provoked him by their sins, and they must fall under the tokens of his wrath. These are compared to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of, as formerly condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to drink the wrath of the Almighty, *Job xxi. 10.* *Rev. xiv. 10.* Their share of troubles in this world is represented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* See *Psal. xi. 16.* The wrath of God in this world is but as a cup, in comparison of the full streams of it in the other world.

2. By whose hand it should be sent them, by the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge set over the nations, *chap. i. 10.* to pass this sentence upon them: and by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure than doth the poor prophet make, then what the potent prince makes, if we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it. Jeremiah must take the cup at God's hand, and compel the nations to drink it. He foretels no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to foretell, and what is foretold by a divine authority will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it should be sent; on all the nations within the verge of Israel's acquaintance with the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and made all the nations to drink of it, i. e. he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. *Jerusalem and the cities of Judah* are put first, *ver. 18.* for judgment begins at the house of God, *1 Pet. iv. 17.* at the sanctuary, *Ezek. ix. 6.* Whether Nebuchadrezzar had his eye particularly upon Jerusalem and Judah in this expedition or no, doth not appear; probably he had; for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye particularly on them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished, which that melancholy parenthesis speaks (*as it is this day*) for in the fourth year of Jehoiakim things were come into a very ill-posture, and all the foundations were out of course. *Pharaoh king of Egypt*, comes next, because the Jews trusted to that broken reed, *ver. 19.* the remains of them fled to Egypt, and there Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, *chap. xliii. 10, 11.* All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The mingled people, the Arabians, to some: some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, to others: the kings of the land of Uz, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lord become a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Israel: the *Isses beyond or beside the sea*, are supposed to be those parts of Phœnicia and Syria, that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Dedan and the other countries mentioned, *ver. 23, 24.* seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert. Those of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes are joined, now looked upon as inconsiderable, and yet afterwards were able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. The kings of the north, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay at some distance, will be sure to be seized on, and made a prey of by the victorious sword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, He shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that all the kingdoms of the world that were then and there known should become sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered the world, and the Roman empire is called the world, *Luke ii. 1.* or it may be taken as reading the doom of all the kingdoms of this earth, one time or other they shall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been and will be a great cock-pit, while men's lusts war as they do in their members, *Jam. iv. 1.* But that the conquerors may see their fate with the conquered, it concludes, the king of Sheshach shall drink after them, i. e. the king of Babylon himself, that has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, shall at length have it return upon his own head. That by Sheshach is meant Babylon, is plain from *chap. li. 41.* but whether it was another name of the same city, or the name of another city of the same kingdom, is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, *ver. 11—13.* and upon this prophecy of its being the author of the ruin of so many nations, it is very fitly repeated here again:

4. What should be the effect of it. The desolations which the sword should make in all these kingdoms are represented by the consequences of excessive drinking, *ver. 16.* They shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, *And ver. 27.* They shall be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more. Now this may serve, (1.) To make us loathe the sin of drunkenness, that the consequences of it are made use of to set forth a most woful and miserable condition. Drunkenness deprives men for the present of the use of their reason, makes them mad. It takes from them likewise that which next to reason is the most valuable blessing, and that is health; it makes them sick, and endangers the bone and the life. Men in drink offend and rise no more: it is a sin that is its own punishment. How wretchedly are they intoxicated, and besotted, that suffer themselves at any time to be intoxicated, especially to be by the frequent commission of this sin besotted with wine or strong drink! (2.) To make us dread the judgments of war. When God sends the sword upon a nation with warrant to make it desolation, it soon becomes like a drunken man, filled with confusion at the

alarms of war, put into a hurry; its counsellors mad, and at their wits end staggering in all the measures they take, all the motions they make sick at heart with continual vexation; vomiting up the riches they have greedily swallowed down, *Job xx. 15.* falling down before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themselves, as a man dead drunk is, *Hab. ii. 16.*

5. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reason given for it, *ver. 28.* 29. They will refuse to take the cup at thy hand; not only they will be loth that the judgment should come, but they will be loth to believe that ever it will come; they will not give credit to the predictions of so despicable a man as Jeremiah; but tell them, it is the word of the Lord of hosts, he hath said it; and it is in vain for them to struggle with Omnipotence, ye shall certainly drink; and give them this reason, it is a time of visitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jerusalem has been called to an account already, I begin to bring evil upon the city that is called by my name; its relation to me will not exempt it from punishment, and should ye be utterly unpunished? No; If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If they that have some good in them smart so severely for the evil that is found in them, can they expect to escape that have worse evils, and no good found among them? If Jerusalem be punished for learning idolatry of the nations, shall not the nations be punished of whom they learned it? No doubt they shall, I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, for they they have helped to debauch the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Upon this whole matter we may observe, (1.) That there is a God that judgeth in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable and by whose judgment they must abide. (2.) That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure. (3.) That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. (4.) That the burden of the word of the Lord will at last become the burden of his judgments. Isaiah had prophesied long since against most of these nations, *chap. xlii. &c.* and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling. (5.) That those who are ambitious of power and dominion commonly become troublers of the earth, and the plagues of their generation; so Nebuchadrezzar was so proud of his might, that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turned the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince, when others thought him no better than a great pirate. (6.) That the greatest pomp and power in this world is of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadrezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield and become captives.

30. Therefore prophecy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. 31. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. 32. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 33. And the slain of the LORD shall be that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. 34. ¶ Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. 35. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. 36. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture. 37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD. 38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

We have in these verses a farther description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon with his armies should make in all the countries and nations round about Jerusalem. In Jerusalem God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances which the neighbouring nations should have attended to, and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied themselves for the knowledge of God and their duty, and they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem: but they instead of that take all opportunities either to debauch or to disturb that holy city when God came to reckon with Jerusalem, because it learned so much of the way of the nations, he reckoned with the nations because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem.

They will soon be aware of Nebuchadrezzar's making war upon them: but the prophet is here bidden to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1. The war is here proclaimed, *ver. 30.* The Lord shall war from on high; not from mount Zion and Jerusalem, as *Joel iii. 16.* *Amos i. 2.* but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation on earth from that above. He has been long silent, and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he shall give a shout, as the assailants in battle do, against all the inhabitants of the earth, to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as their's that tread the grapes; for when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men there is a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Hallelujah, *Rev. xix. 1.* He roars as a lion, *Amos iii. 4—8.* as a lion that has forsaken his covert, *ver. 38.* and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars that he may the more easily seize it.

2. The manifesto is here published, shewing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war, *ver. 31. The Lord hath a controversy with the nations*; he hath just cause to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them, *He will give them that are wicked to the sword*. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is *because of the fierce anger of the Lord, ver. 37.* and again, *ver. 38. the fierceness of the oppressor*; or, as it might better be read, *the fierceness of the oppressing sword*, (for the word is feminine) is *because of his fierce anger*; and we are sure he is never angry without cause; but *who knows the power of his anger?*

3. The alarm is here given and taken, *A noise will come even to the ends of the earth*, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, *ver. 31.* The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a *whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm, or tempest*, which shall be *raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, ver. 32.* The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the *whirlwind* out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, *Job xxxvii. 1. and xxxviii. 1.* And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with shrieks from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? see *Hosea xi. 10.* Now the shepherds shall *howl and cry*, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the *principal of the flock* though they used to be the most courageous and secure, yet now their hearts shall fail them, *they shall wallow themselves in the ashes, ver. 34.* Seeing themselves utterly unable to make head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of and concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a *voice of the cry of the shepherds*, and a *howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, ver. 36.* Those are great calamities indeed that strike such a terror upon the great men, and put them into this mighty consternation. *The Lord hath spoiled their pasture*, in which they fed their flock, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming towards their flocks, and find they have *no way to flee, ver. 35.* for their own safety, neither can the *principal of their flock escape*. The enemy will be so numerous, so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot out-face, so we cannot out-run the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds *howl and cry*.

4. The progress of this war is here described, *ver. 32. Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation*; as the cup goes round, every nation shall have its share and take its turn, because one doth not take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from *one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, ver. 33.* The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now *his hand shall find out all his enemies* wherever they are, *Psal. xxi. 8.* Note, When our neighbour's house is on fire it is time to be concerned for our own. When our nation is a seat of war, every neighbour-nation shall hear and fear, and makes its peace with God.

5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold, *The days of slaughter and dispersion are accomplished, i. e. they are fully come, ver. 34.* the time fixed in the divine counsel for the *slaughter* of some and the *dispersion* of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the *slain of the Lord* shall be every where found: they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the *slain of the Lord*. And to complete the misery of their slaughter, *they shall not be lamented* in particular, so general shall the matter of lamentation be: Nay, they shall not be *gathered up, nor buried*, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be *as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome*; and it is well if as dung manures the earth and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles which lie as monuments of divine justice might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to *learn righteousness*. The effect of this war will be the *desolation of the whole land* that is the seat of it, *ver. 38.* one land after another. But here are two expressions more that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous. (1.) *Ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, ver. 34.* The most desirable persons among them, that most valued themselves and were most valued, shall fall by the sword; that were looked upon as *vessels of honour*. Ye shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces; even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another. (2.) *Even the peaceable habitations are cut down.* Those that used to be quiet and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but *cut down* by the war: or, those that used to be quiet and not molesting any of their neighbours, those that lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, yet shall not escape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and inoffensive, yet suffer hard things. Blessed be God there is a *peaceable habitation* above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

C H A P. XXVI.

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that of their preaching and that of their suffering is interwoven, so it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, (1.) *How faithfully he preached, ver. 2—6.* (2.) *How spitefully he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, ver. 7—11.* (3.) *How bravely he stood to his doctrine in the face of his persecutors, ver. 12—15.* (4.) *How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders, ver. 16—19.* Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim, *ver. 20—23.* yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, *ver. 24.*

1. **I**N the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil

way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; if ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence, that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record as it were by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

1. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, *ver. 2.* Let not any censure Jeremiah as indiscreet in his choice of place and time, nor say he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously: for God gave him orders to preach *in the court of the Lord's house*, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it should seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons were come from all the cities of Judah, to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they put into an ill name, and consequently side with them, and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah; but none of these things must move him or daunt him; in the face of all this danger he must preach this sermon, which if it were not convincing would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God charged him particularly *not to diminish a word*, but to speak all the things, nay, and *all the words* that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambassadors must keep close to their instructions, and not in the least vary from them, either to please men or to save themselves harmless: They must neither *add nor diminish*, Deut. iv. 2.

2. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them, that if they would *repent of their sins*, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a stop should be put to them, and God would proceed no farther in his controversy with them, *ver. 3.* this was the main thing God intended in sending him to them to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them; which he was not only willing, but very desirous to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God *wants to be gracious*, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must on the other hand assure them, that if they continue obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (1.) That which God required of them was, that they should be obedient of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers: that they should *walk in all his law, which he set before them*, the law of Moses, and the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should *hearken to the words of his servants the prophets*, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, that was *set before them*, as a touchstone to try the spirits by; and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, who drew them from the law, instead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himself *set before them*: The prophets were his *own servants*, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, *rising early to send them*, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets, *ye have not hearkened*; all he expects now is, that at length they should heed what he said, and make his word their rule. A reasonable demand! (2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal is, that this city, and the temple in it, should fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more unexceptionably? It is not a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*? If Jerusalem be like Shiloh, in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this purpose; see *chap. vii. 12, 13, 14.* When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem was destroyed, the city was thereby *made a curse*; for the temple was that which made it a blessing. *If the full loss that furour, it is henceforth good for nothing.* It shall be a curse, i. e. shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, *God make it like Jerusalem!* Note, Those that will not be subject to the commands of God, make themselves subject to the curse of God.

7. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8. ¶ Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10. ¶ When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house. 11. Then spake the priests and the prophets

prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12. ¶ Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophecy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. 15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so rational and prophetic, and delivered in God's name, should have wrought upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their devotions, and should have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but instead of awakening their convictions, it did but exasperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

1. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The priests and false prophets and people heard him speak these words, ver. 7. And it seems they had patience to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him to speak: so far they were fairer with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have been; they let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with an ill design, in hopes to have something worse to lay to his charge: but having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon: He had said, *This house shall be like Shiloh*. See how unfair they are in representing his words: He had said in God's name, *If ye will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh*; but they leave out God's hand in the delolation, *I will make it so*, and their own hand in it in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charge it upon him, that he blasphemed this holy place: the crime charged both to our Lord Jesus and on Stephen, that he said, *This house shall be like Shiloh*. Well might he complain, as David doth, *Psal. lvi. 5. Every day they wrest my words*; and we must not think it strange, if we and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. And when the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust, *Thou shalt surely die*. What he had said agreed with what God had said when he took possession of the temple, *1 Kings ix. 6, 7, 8. If you shall at all turn from following after me, then this house shall be abandoned*, and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the temple of the Lord will protect them: therefore right or wrong, *Thou shalt surely die*. This outcry of the priests and prophets raised the mob, and all the people were gathered together against Jeremiah, in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him, to some read it; they flocked together, some crying one thing, and some another. The people that were at first present were hot against him, ver. 8. but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was.

2. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the highest court of Judicature they had. Here, (1.) The princes of Judah were his judges, ver. 10. Those that filled the thrones of Judgment, the thrones of the house of David, the elders of Israel, they hearing of this tumult in the temple, came up from the king's house, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter, and to see that nothing was done disorderly. They sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and held a court as it were by a special commission of Over and Terminer. (2.) The priests and prophets were his persecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him. They appealed to the princes and to all the people, to the court and the jury, whether this man be not worthy to die, ver. 11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets have always been the most bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, chap. xxii. 1. the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and toucheth the copy-book of the priests, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy to die. For the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, Jer. v. 31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, *Ye have heard what he hath said*, let it be given in evidence.

3. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He doth not go about to deny the words, or to diminish ought from them, what he hath said he will stand to, though it cost him his life, and owns he had prophesied against this house, and this city. But,

1. He asserts, that he did it with a good authority; not maliciously or seditiously, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any disaffection to the government in church or state, but, *The Lord sent me to prophecy thus*; so he begins his apology, ver. 12. and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to bear him out, ver. 15. *Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words*. As long as ministers keep close to the instructions they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were as accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador, will be repented by the prince that sent him.

2. He shews them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence, ver. 13. *Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness*.

ness he could do me? *I have (saith Jeremiah) prophesied against this city, but if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning*. Those are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment and bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger if they proceed against him, ver. 14. *As for me, the matter is not great what becomes of me; Behold, I am in your hand; you know I am; I neither have any power, nor can make any interest to oppose you, neither is it so much my concern to save my own life; do with me as seemeth meet unto you, if I be led to the slaughter, it shall be as a lamb*. Note, It becomes God's ministers, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in suffering, and to carry it submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But for themselves, he tells them, it is at their peril if they put him to death, *Ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves*, ver. 15. They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but they would prove wretchedly deceived, it would add to their guilt, and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God's ministers, hurt not themselves so much as themselves.

16. ¶ Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God. 17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt? 22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt. 23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

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1. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the princes before-mentioned, or the more intelligent men of the people, stood up and put the assembly in mind of a former case, and it is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah: We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, ver. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purpose, *Zion shall be ploughed like a field, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed: Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built, shall be as the high places of the forest, over-run with briars and thorns*. The prophet not only spoke this, but wrote it, and left it on record: we find it, *Micah iii. 12*. By this it appears, that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has been said many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to say. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, i. e. the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him; and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them: Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he feared the Lord as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear

2. The manifesto is here published, shewing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war, *ver. 31. The Lord hath a controversy with the nations*; he hath just cause to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them, *He will give them that are wicked to the sword*. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is *because of the fierce anger of the Lord, ver. 37. and again, ver. 38. the fierceness of the oppressor*; or, as it might better be read, *the fierceness of the oppressing sword*, (for the word is feminine) is *because of his fierce anger*; and we are sure he is never angry without cause; but *who knows the power of his anger?*

3. The alarm is here given and taken, *A noise will come even to the ends of the earth, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, ver. 31.* The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a *whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm, or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, ver. 32.* The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the *whirlwind* out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, *Job xxxvii. 1. and xxxviii. 1.* And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with shrieks from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? see *Hosea xi. 10.* Now the shepherds shall *howl and cry*, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the *principal of the flock* though they used to be the most courageous and secure, yet now their hearts shall fail them, *they shall wallow themselves in the ashes, ver. 34.* Seeing themselves utterly unable to make head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of and concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a *voice of the cry of the shepherds*, and a *howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, ver. 36.* Those are great calamities indeed that strike such a terror upon the great men, and put them into this mighty consternation. *The Lord hath spoiled their pasture*, in which they fed their flock, and out of which they led themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming towards their flocks, and find they have *no way to flee, ver. 35.* for their own safety, neither can the *principal of their flock escape.* The enemy will be so numerous, so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot out-face, so we cannot out-run the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds *howl and cry.*

4. The progress of this war is here described, *ver. 32. Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation*; as the cup goes round, every nation shall have its share and take its turn, because one doth not take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from *one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, ver. 33.* The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now *his hand shall find out all his enemies* wherever they are, *Psal. xxi. 8.* Note, When our neighbour's house is on fire it is time to be concerned for our own. When our nation is a seat of war, every neighbour-nation shall hear and fear, and makes its peace with God.

5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold, *The days of slaughter and dispersion are accomplished, i. e. they are fully come, ver. 34.* the time fixed in the divine counsel for the *slaughter* of some and the *dispersion* of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the *slain of the Lord* shall be every where found: they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the *slain of the Lord.* And to complete the misery of their slaughter, *they shall not be lamented* in particular, so general shall the matter of lamentation be: Nay, they shall not be gathered up, nor buried, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be *as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome*; and it is well if *as dung manures the earth and makes it fruitful*, so these horrid spectacles which lie as monuments of divine justice might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to *learn righteousness.* The effect of this war will be the *desolation of the whole land* that is the seat of it, *ver. 38. one land after another.* But here are two expressions more that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous. (1.) *Ye shall fall like a pleasant temple, ver. 34.* The most desirable persons among them, that most valued themselves and were most valued, shall fall by the sword; that were looked upon as *rejoys of honour.* Ye shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces; even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another. (2.) *Even the peaceable habitations are cut down.* Those that used to be quiet and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but *cut down* by the war: or, those that used to be quiet and not molesting any of their neighbours, those that lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, yet shall not escape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and inoffensive, yet suffer hard things. Blessed be God there is a *peaceable habitation* above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

C H A P. XXVI.

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that of their preaching and that of their suffering is interwoven, so it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, (1.) *How faithfully he preached, ver. 2—6.* (2.) *How spitefully he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, ver. 7—11.* (3.) *How bravely he stood to his doctrine in the face of his persecutors, ver. 12—15.* (4.) *How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders, ver. 16—19.* Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim, *ver. 20—23.* yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, *ver. 24.*

1. IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil

way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; if ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence, that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record as it were by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

1. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, *ver. 2.* Let not any censure Jeremiah as indifereet in his choice of place and time, nor say he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously: for God gave him orders to preach *in the court of the Lord's house*, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it should seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons were come from all the cities of Judah, to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they put into an ill name, and consequently side with them, and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah; but none of these things must move him or daunt him; in the face of all this danger he must preach this sermon, which if it were not convincing would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God chargeth him particularly *not to diminish a word*, but to speak all the things, nay, and *all the words* that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambassadors must keep close to their instructions, and not in the least vary from them, either to please men or to save themselves harmless: They must neither *add nor diminish*, Deut. iv. 2.

2. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them, that if they would *repent of their sins*, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a stop should be put to them, and God would proceed no farther in his controversy with them, *ver. 3.* this was the main thing God intended in sending him to them to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them; which he was not only willing, but very desirous to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God *wants to be gracious*, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must on the other hand assure them, that if they continue obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (1.) That which God required of them was, that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers: that they should *walk in all his law, which he set before them*, the law of Moses, and the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should *hearken to the words of his servants the prophets*, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, that was *set before them*, as a touchstone to try the spirits by; and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, who drew them from the law, instead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himself *set before them*: The prophets were *his own servants*, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, *rising early to send them*, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets, *ye have not hearkened*; all he expects now is, that at length they should heed what he said, and make his word their rule. A reasonable demand! (2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal is, that this city, and the temple in it, should fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more unexceptionably? It is not a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*? If Jerusalem be like Shiloh, in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this purpose; see *chap. vii. 12, 13, 14.* When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem was destroyed, the city was thereby *made a curse*; for the temple was that which made it a blessing. *If the full life that furour, it is henceforth good for nothing.* It shall be a curse, i. e. shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, *God make it like Jerusalem!* Note, Those that will not be subject to the commands of God, make themselves subject to the curse of God.

7. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8. ¶ Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10. ¶ When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house. 11. Then spake the priests and the prophets

prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12. ¶ Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophecy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. 15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so rational and prophetic, and delivered in God's name, should have wrought upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their devotions, and should have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but instead of awakening their convictions, it did but exasperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

1. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The priests and false prophets and people heard him speak these words. ver. 7. And it seems they had patience to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him to speak: so far they were fairer with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have been; they let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with an ill design, in hopes to have something worse to lay to his charge; but having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon: He had said, *This house shall be like Shiloh*. See how unfair they are in representing his words: He had said in God's name, *If ye will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh*; but they leave out God's hand in the denotation, *I will make it so*, and their own hand in it in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charge it upon him, that he blasphemed this holy place: the crime charged both to our Lord Jesus and on Stephen, that he said, *This house shall be like Shiloh*. Well might he complain, as David doth, *Psal. lvi. 5. Every day they wrest my words*; and we must not think it strange, if we and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. And when the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust, *Thou shalt surely die*. What he had said agreed with what God had said when he took possession of the temple, *1 Kings ix. 6, 7, 8. If you shall at all turn from following after me, then this house shall be abandoned*, and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the temple of the Lord will protect them: therefore right or wrong, *Thou shalt surely die*. This outcry of the priests and prophets raised the mob, and all the people were gathered together against Jeremiah, in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him, so some read it; they flocked together, some crying one thing, and some another. The people that were at first present were hot against him, ver. 8. but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was.

2. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the highest court of Judicature they had. Here, (1.) The princes of Judah were his judges, ver. 10. Those that filled the thrones of Judgment, the thrones of the house of David, the elders of Israel, they hearing of this tumult in the temple, came up from the king's house, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter, and to see that nothing was done disorderly. They sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and held a court as it were by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. (2.) The priests and prophets were his persecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him. They appealed to the princes and to all the people, to the court and the jury, whether this man be not worthy to die, ver. 11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets have always been the most bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, chap. xxii. 1. the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and toucheth the copy-hold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy to die. For the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, Jer. v. 31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the facts of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, *Ye have heard what he hath said*, let it be given in evidence.

3. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He doth not go about to deny the words, or to diminish ought from them, what he hath said he will stand to, though it cost him his life, and owns he had prophesied against this house, and this city. But,

1. He asserts, that he did this by a good authority; not maliciously or seditiously, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any disaffection to the government in church or state, but, *The Lord sent me to prophecy thus*; so he begins his apology, ver. 12. and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to bear him out, ver. 15. *Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words*. As long as ministers keep close to the instructions they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were as accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador, will be repented by the prince that sent him.

2. He shews them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence, ver. 13. Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness?

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16. ¶ Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God. 17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt? 22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt. 23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword; and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Here is, 1. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had indeed spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be seditious or treasonable, ill-intended, or of any ill tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The priests and prophets, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the princes, and all the people are clear in it, *That this man is not worthy to die*, ver. 16. for (say they) he hath spoken to us, not of himself, but in the name of the Lord our God. And are they willing to own that he did indeed speak to them in the name of the Lord, and that that Lord is their God? why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If say they his prophecy is from heaven, it may justly be asked, *Why then did ye not believe him?* Matt. xxi. 23. Note, It is pity that those who are so far convinced of the divine original of gospel-preaching, as to protect it from the malice of others, do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

1. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the princes before-mentioned, or the more intelligent men of the people, stood up and put the assembly in mind of a former case, and it is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah: We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, ver. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purpose, *Zion shall be ploughed like a field*, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed: *Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built, shall be as the high places of the forest*, over-run with briars and thorns. The prophet not only spoke this, but wrote it, and left it on record: we find it, *Micah iii. 12*. By this it appears, that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has been said many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to say. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, i. e. the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him, and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them: Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he feared the Lord as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with

f. ar. Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he besought the Lord to turn away the judgment threatened, and to be reconciled to them; and he found it was not in vain to do so, for the Lord repented him of the evil, and returned in mercy to them; sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians, that threatened to have ploughed Zion like a field, ver. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then you may be sure he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude, that it would be of dangerous consequence to the state, if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death; *Thus might we procure great evils against our souls.* Note, It is good to frighten ourselves from sin, with the consideration of the mischief we shall certainly do to ourselves by it, and the irreparable damage it will be to our own souls.

3. Here is an instance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim for prophesying as Jeremiah had done, ver. 20, &c. Some make this to be urged by the persecutors, as a case that favoured the prosecution, a modern case, in which speaking such words as Jeremiah had spoken was adjudged treason. Others think the elders that were advocates for Jeremiah, alledged this, to shew that thus they might procure great evil against their souls, for it would be adding sin to sin; Jehoiakim the present king had slain one prophet already, let them not fill up the measure by slaying another. Hezekiah that protected Micah prospered; but did Jehoiakim prosper that slew Urijah; No, they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters take this narrative from the historian that penned the book of Jeremiah himself, or Baruch, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this passage that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the beginning of his reign, ver. 1. Observe, (1.) Urijah's prophecy, it was against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. The prophets of the Lord agreed in their testimony, and one would have thought, that out of the mouth of so many witnesses the word should have been regarded. (2.) The prosecution of him for it, ver. 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and sought to put him to death, in this wicked design the king himself was principally concerned. (3.) His absconding thereupon. When he heard that the king was become his enemy, and sought his life, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt. This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that fear of man which brings a snare. It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said, or was ashamed of his master. It was especially unbecoming him to flee into Egypt, and so in effect to abandon the land of Israel, and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful. Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage; they are very honest, but withal very timorous. (4.) His execution notwithstanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would have thought, might have contented itself with his banishment, and it might suffice to have driven him the country; but they are blood-thirsty that hate the upright, Prov. xxix. 10. it was the life, that precious life that he hunted after, and nothing else would satisfy him. So implacable in his revenge, that he sends a party of soldiers into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle; they brought him to Jehoiakim, and he slew him with the sword, for ought I know with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction, but cast it into the graves of the common people, as if he had not been a prophet of the Lord; thus was the shield of Saul vilely cast away as though he had not been anointed with oil. Thus Jehoiakim hoped to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner, but in vain Jeremiah saith the same. There is no contending with the word of God, Herod thought he had gained his point when he had cut off John Baptist's head, but found himself deceived, when soon after he heard of Jesus Christ, and said in a bright, *This is John the Baptist.*

(4.) Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more, as Herod, Acts x. 1. 2, 3. yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not flee as Urijah did, but stood his ground. Ordinary ministers may use ordinary means, provided they be lawfulness, for their own preservation; but they that had an extraordinary mission, might expect an extraordinary protection. God raised up a friend for Jeremiah, whose hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, assisted him, appeared for him. It was Ahikam the son of Shaphan, one that was minister of state in Josiah's time; we read of him, 2 Kings xxi. 12. Some think Gedaliah was the son of this Ahikam. He had a great interest it should seem among the princes, and he used it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the farther designs of the priests and prophets against him, who would have had him turned over into the hand of the people; not those people, ver. 16. that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and insolent mob, whom they could persuade by their cursed insinuations not only to cry, *crucify him, crucify him*, but to *stone him to death* in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been so reproached by his own conscience for slaying Urijah, that they despaired of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleaseth, raise up great men to patronize good men; and it is an encouragement to us to trust him in the way of duty, that he hath all men's hearts in his hands.

C H A P. XXVII.

Jeremiah the prophet, since he cannot persuade people to submit to God's precept, and so to prevent the destruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here persuading them to submit to God's providence, by yielding tamely to the king of Babylon, and becoming tributaries to him, which was the wisest way they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waste by fire and sword; the sacrificing of their liberties would be the saving of their lives. (1.) He gives this counsel in God's name to the king of the neighbour-nations, that they might make the best of bad, assuring them that there was no remedy, but they must serve the king of Babylon; and yet intimes there should be relief, for his dominion should last but 70 years, ver. 1—11. (2.) He gives this counsel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly, ver. 12—14. and to the priests and people, assuring them, that the king of Babylon should still proceed against them, till things were brought to the last extremity, and a patient submission would be the only way to mitigate the calamity, and make it easy, ver. 12—22. Thus the prophet, if they would but have hearkened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy, or well as of true piety.

1. IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying. 2. Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck. 3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; 5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant: and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. 7. And all nations shall serve him and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners: nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your forcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is said to come to Jeremiah in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, ver. 1. and yet the messengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of servitude, are said, ver. 3. to come to Zedekiah king of Judah, who reigned not till eleven years after the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and that it should be read, ver. 1. *In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, for which some negligent scribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote Jehoiakim. And if one would admit a mistake any where it should be here, for Zedekiah is mentioned again, ver. 12. and the next prophecy is dated the same year, and said to be in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, chap. xxviii. 1. Dr. Lightfoot solves it thus, in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah is to make these bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah's subjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time, but he is to send them to the neighbouring kings afterwards in the reign of Zedekiah, of whose succession to Jehoiakim, and the ambassadors sent to him, mention is made by way of prediction.

1. Jeremiah is to prepare a sign of the general reduction of all these countries into subjection to the king of Babylon, ver. 2. *Make the bonds and yokes*, yokes with bonds to fasten them, that the beast may not slip his neck out of the yoke. Into these the prophet must put his own neck, to make them taken notice of as a prophetic representation; for every one would enquire, what was the meaning of Jeremiah's yokes? We find him with one on, chap. xxviii. 10. Hereby he intimated, that he advised them to nothing but what he was resolved to do himself; for he was none of those that bind heavy burdens on others, which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. Ministers must thus lay themselves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.

2. He is to send this, with a sermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; those are mentioned, ver. 3. that lay next to the land of Canaan. It should seem there was a treaty of alliance on foot between the king of Judah and all those other kings; Jerusalem was the place appointed for the treaty: thither they all send their plenipotentiaries; and it was agreed, that they should bind themselves in a league offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the growing threatening greatness of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. A mighty confidence they had in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves the High Allies: But when the envoys were returning to their respective masters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his master, to signify to him, that he must, either by consent or by compulsion, become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleaseth, ver. 5. He is the creator of all things; he made the earth at first, established it, and it abideth: It is still the same, though one generation passeth away, and another comes; he still by a continued creation produceth man and beast upon the ground; and it is by his great power and outstretched arm. His arm has an infinite strength, though it be stretched out. Upon this account he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleaseth. As he hath graciously given the earth to the children of men in general, Psal. cxv. 16. so he gives to each their share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever any have of the good things of this world, it is what God sees fit to give them; we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have never so little, and not envy any their share, though they have never so much.

2. He publisheth a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents, *Sciant presentes & futuri*. This is to certify all whom it may concern, that I have given all these lands, with all the wealth of them, into the hands of the king of Babylon, even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, have I given to him, parks and pastures, they are all his own. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud wicked man, an idolater, and yet God in his providence gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions

possessions. Note, *The things of this world are not the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had, he had by divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness, may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very ill man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he employed him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people; and for his service therein, he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of, shall not lose by him; much more will he be found the beautiful rewarder of all those that designedly and sincerely serve him.*

3. He assures them, that they should all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon for a time, *ver. 7. All nations, all these nations, and many others, shall serve him and his son, and his son's son: His son was Evil-Merodach, and his son's son Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased; then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables shall be turned, and many nations and great kings incorporated into the empire of the Medes and Persians shall serve themselves of him, as before, chap. xxv. 14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.*

4. He threatens those with military execution that stood out and would not submit to the king of Babylon, *ver. 8. That nation that will not put their neck under his yoke, I will punish with sword and famine, with one judgment after another, till it is consumed by his hand.* Nebuchadnezzar was very unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours thus, and forcing them into a subjection to him; yet God had just and holy ends in permitting it, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. They that would not serve the God that made them, were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shews them the vanity of all the hopes they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, *ver. 9, 10. These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretell future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances, that they should not serve the king of Babylon. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and though they had no ground for it, they hoped thereby to do them service: But he tells them it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to remove them, and drive them out into a miserable captivity in which they should all be lost, and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severally, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, Jer. xlviii. and xlix. and Ezek. xxv. which had the same accomplishment with this here, Note, When God judgeth he will overcome.*

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, *ver. 11. The nations that will be content to serve the king of Babylon, and pay him tribute for 70 years (ten apprenticeships) those will I let remain still in their own land: They that will bend, shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is many times more a point of honour than true wisdom, to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Ilshar, that because he saw rest was good, and the land pleasant, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute, Gen. xlix. 14, 15. as these here are advised to do, serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land, and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, that yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest terms of providence makes the best of bad: it is better to do so, than by struggling make it worse.*

Levis fit patientia quicquid corrigere est nefas.

Many might have prevented destroying providences, by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better to take up a lighter cross in our way, than pull a heavier on our own head.

12. I spake also unto Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. 13. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophecy a lie unto you. 15. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophecy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophecy unto you. 16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophecy unto you, saying, Behold the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophecy a lie unto you. 17. Hearken, not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste. 18. But if they be prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19. ¶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city. 20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; 21. Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house

of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and of Jerusalem; 22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations, is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus: Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods, were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now, how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem who pretended to be prophets, that bid them hold out, and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all that they had lost: Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield and knock under, for, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained, and to press them to this is the scope of these verses,

1. Jeremiah humbly addresseth the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Babylon: his aim would be the people's, and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to them all, *ver. 12. Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live. Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies? And is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of our rightful Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cogency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls, than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people, Why will ye die by the sword and the famine? Miserable deaths, which you inevitably run yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives. What God hath spoken in general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves, and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would, in like manner, be afraid of the destruction threatened against all those that will not have Christ to reign over them, and reason thus with themselves, Why should we die the second death, which is a thousand times worse than that by sword and famine, when we might submit and live?*

2. He addresseth himself likewise to the priests and the people, *ver. 16. to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city, ver. 17. Wherefore should it be laid waste? as certainly it will if you stand it out. The priests had been Jeremiah's enemies, and had sought his life to destroy it, yet he approves himself their friend, and seeks their lives to preserve and secure them; which is an example to us to render good for evil: when the blood-thirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek his soul, and the welfare of it, Prov. xxix. 10. The matter was far gone here, they were upon the brink of ruin, which they had not been brought to if they would have taken Jeremiah's counsel, yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them to save the last stake and manage that wisely, and now at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, when they had but one day to turn them in.*

3. In both these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets that rocked them asleep in their security, because they saw they loved to slumber: *Hearken not to the words of the prophets, ver. 14. your prophets, ver. 16. They are not God's prophets, he never sent them, they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are your's, for they say what you would have them say, and aim at nothing but to please you.*

Two things their prophets flattered them into the belief of.

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them should now shortly be broken: They said, *ver. 14. Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon; you need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit. This they prophesied in the name of the Lord, ver. 15. as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not disparage themselves by an inglorious surrender. But it was a lie; they said God sent them, but that was false, he disowns it, I have not sent them, saith the Lord: they said they should never be brought into subjection to the king of Babylon, but that was false too, the event proved it so: they said, to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out and perishing. So that it was all a lie from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these lies, did, in the issue, but deceive themselves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch, that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophecy unto you; who will be so far from warranting your security that they cannot secure themselves. Note, They that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways, will in the end perish with them.*

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple which the king of Babylon had already carried away should now shortly be brought back, *ver. 16. this they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how acceptable it would be to them who loved the gold of the temple better than the temple that sanctified the gold. These vessels were taken away when Jeconiah was carried captive into Babylon, ver. 20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2 Kings xxiv. 13, 14, 15. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. All the goodly vessels, that is, all the vessels of gold that were in the house of the Lord, with all the treasures, were taken as prey and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their God was departed from them. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy, but by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now here,*

(1.) Jeremiah bids them think of preserving the vessels that remained by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone by their prophecies, *ver. 18. If they be prophets, as they pretend, and if the word of the Lord be with them; and if they have any intercourse with them, and any interest there, let them improve it for the stopping of the progress of the judgment, let them step into the gap, and stand with their center between the living and the dead, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that the plague may be stayed: Let them make intercession with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels that are left go not after the rest. (1.) Instead of prophesying let them pray. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer they must make it to appear that they keep up a correspondence with heaven. We cannot think that those do, as prophets, ever hear thence, who do not frequently by prayer send thither. By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary they must make it to appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. (2.) Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must bestir themselves for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they*

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can gain that point. When God's judgments are abroad, we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

2. He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, *ver. 19—22*. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once, that he would be sure to come again and take all he could find, not only in the house of the Lord, but in the king's house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and there shall they be. But he concludes with a gracious promise, that the time should come when they should all be returned; *until the day that I visit them in mercy, according to appointment, and then I will bring those vessels up again, and restore them to this place, to their place*. Surely they were under the protection of a special providence, else they had been melted down and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, *Ezra i. 8*. Note, Though the return of the church's prosperity do not come in our time, we must not therefore despair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though they that said the vessels of the Lord's house shall shortly be brought again prophesied a lie, *ver. 16*, yet he that said they shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth. We are apt to set our clock before God's dial; and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit we should wait for him.

C H A P. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies, who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; now here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads. (1.) Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away, *ver. 1—4*. and as a sign of this he broke the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, *ver. 10, 11*. (2.) Jeremiah wished his words might prove true, but appealed to the event whether they were so or no, not doubting but that would disprove them, *ver. 5—9*. (3.) The doom both of the deceived and the deceivers is here read. The people that were deceived should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron, *ver. 12—14*. and the prophet that was the deceiver should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so accordingly within two months, *ver. 15—17*.

1. **A**ND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah; with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. 5. ¶ Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD. 6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people: 8. The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. 9. The prophet which prophesied of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

The struggle between a true prophet and a false one, is said here to have happened in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, and yet in the fourth year for the four first years of his reign might well be called the beginning, or former part of it, because during those years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the latter part of it, in distinction from that former part, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign he went in person to Babylon, as we find, *Jer. li. 59*, and it is probable that gave the people some hope that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them; this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeon, a priest's city, and therefore probably himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

1. The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, in the house of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, who probably were expecting to have some message from heaven; in delivering this prophecy he faced Jeremiah, he spoke to him, *ver. 1*, designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, Jeremiah, thou liest. Now his prediction is, that the king of Babylon's power, at least his power over Judah and Jerusalem should be speedily broken; that, within two full years the vessels of the temple should be brought back, and Jeremiah and all the captives that were carried away with him should return, whereas Jeremiah had foretold, that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for 70 years, *ver. 2, 3, 4*. Now upon the reading of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference

there is between them. Here is nothing of that spirit and life, that majesty of style, sublimeness of expression, that appears in the discourses of God's prophets, nothing of divine flame and *status*. But that which is especially wanting here is an air of piety; he speaks with a great deal of confidence of the return of their prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray and seek his face, that they might be prepared for those favours God had in reserve for them. He promiseth them temporal mercies in God's name but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, as *chap. xxiv. 7*. *I will give them a heart to know me*. By all which it appears that whatever he pretended, he had only the spirit of the world, not the Spirit of God, *1 Cor. ii. 12*. that he aimed to please, not to profit.

2. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy.

1. He heartily wisheth it might prove true; such an affection has he for his country, and so truly desirous is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, so that their ruin might be prevented. He said, *Amen, the Lord do so, the Lord perform thy words*, *ver. 5, 6*. This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments, which yet he certainly knew would come; as Christ prayed, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet as a faithful Israelite, he prayed earnestly for the preservation of it, in obedience to that command, *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*. Though the will of God's purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, yet doth not desire the death of sinners, but would have all men to be saved. Jeremiah often interceded for his people, *chap. xviii. 20*. The false prophets thought to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shews, that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did that they were so fond of; and though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it and prayed for it. How strangely were they befotted, who cared those who did them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them; and persecuted them who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! See *chap. xxvii. 18*.

2. He appeals to the event to prove it false, *ver. 7, 8, 9*. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micajah, because he never prophesied good concerning them, but evil; now he pleads, that this had been the purport of the prophecies that other prophets had delivered, so that it ought not to be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful, for prophets of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them, and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did: they made no difficulty, no more than Jeremiah did, of threatening war, famine and pestilence, and what they said was regarded as coming from God, why then should Jeremiah be run down as a pestilent fellow, and a sower of sedition, who preached no otherwise than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold destruction, and sometimes the destruction did not come, which yet did not disprove their divine mission, as in the case of Jonah, for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from those that turn away from their sins; but the prophet that prophesied of peace and prosperity, especially as Hananiah did absolutely and unconditionally, without adding that necessary proviso, that they do not by wilful sin put a bar in their own door and stop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet only by the accomplishment of his prediction: if it come to pass, then it shall be known that the Lord hath sent him, but if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an imposter.

10. ¶ Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. 11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12. ¶ Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet (after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah) saying, 13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. 14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. 15. ¶ Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The LORD hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. 16. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. 17. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

We have here instance,

1. Of the insolence of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, he took the yoke from off his neck; which he carried as a memorial of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he broke it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy: see how the lying spirit in the mouth of this false prophet mimics the language of the Spirit of truth. *Thus saith the Lord, So will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon, not only from the neck of this nation, but from the neck of all nations within two full years*. Whether by the force of a heated indignation, Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, doth not appear; but it is plain he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

2. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly went his way, and

and when he was reviled, he reviled not again, and would not contend with one that is in the height of his fury, and in the midst of the priests and people that were violently set against him. The reason why he went his way, was not because he had nothing to answer, but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him with a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that: *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear: and thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.* It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend. *Currenti cede furori.*

3. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man in whose mouth there was no rebuke, but God soon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him.

(1.) The word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself distrust the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be the truth of God, we must not unsay it because men gainsay it; for *great is the truth and will prevail.* It will stand, therefore let us stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it of no effect. Hananiah hath broken the yokes of wood, but Jeremiah must make for them yokes of iron which cannot be broken, ver. 13. for (saith God) *I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, which shall lie heavier and bind harder upon them, ver. 14. that they may serve the king of Babylon,* and not be able to shake off the yoke however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no; and who is he that can contend with God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again, *I have given him the beasts of the field also,* as if there were something significant in that: men had by their wickedness made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with, for whom he would he flew, and whom he would he kept alive.

(2.) Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face; though before he received that commission he went away and said nothing.

1. The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted, are cheating the people and affronting God, *Thou makest this people to trust in a lie,* encouraging them to hope they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst, *thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord,* i. e. thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsels given them in God's name by the true prophets, and rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for, who by telling sinners they shall have peace though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods God takes to bring them to repentance.

2. The judgment given against him is, *I will cut thee off from the face of the earth,* as unworthy to live upon it, thou shalt be buried in it; *this year thou shalt die,* and die as a rebel against the Lord, to whom death would come with a sting and a curse. This sentence was executed, ver. 17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months: for his prophecy is dated the fifth month, ver. 1. and his death the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death, in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold, as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from heaven against him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being farther hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

C H A P. XXIX.

The contest between Jeremiah and the false prophets was carried on before by preaching, here by writing: there we had sermon against sermon, here we have letter against letter; for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, 1. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there, ver. 1, 2, 3. in which letter, (1.) He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it, and make the best of it, ver. 4—7. (2.) He cautions them not to give any credit to their false prophets, that sed them with hopes of a speedy release, ver. 8, 9. (3.) He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again at the end of seventy years, ver. 10—14. (4.) He foretells the destruction of those who yet continued, and that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity, ver. 15—19. (5.) He prophesies the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, that both soothed them up in their sins, and set them ill examples, ver. 20—23. and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter. 2. Here is a letter which Shemaiah a false prophet in Babylon wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah, ver. 23—29. and a denunciation of God's wrath against him for writing such a letter, ver. 30, 31, 39. Such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

1. **N**OW these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; 2. (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;) 3. By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying, 4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; 5. Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands,

that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

We are here told,

1. That Jeremiah did write to the captives in Babylon in the name of the Lord. Jeconiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, many of the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, that were at that time the most active men, the carpenters and smiths likewise being demanded were yielded up, that those which remain might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furnish themselves with weapons of war; by this tame submission it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified: *Satis est prostrasse leoni;* but the imperious conqueror grows upon their concessions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1 Kings xx, 5, 6. And not content with this, when these were departed from Jerusalem, he comes again and fetcheth away many more of the elders, the priests, and the prophets, and the people, ver. 1. such as he thought fit, or such as his soldiers could lay hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather because they, being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men that dwelt at Jerusalem; Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of succour themselves, or to envy their brethren that were left behind, Note, 1. The word of God written, is as truly given by inspiration of God, as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad. 2. We may serve God, and do good by writing to our friends at a distance, pious letters of seasonable comforts and wholesome counsels, whom we cannot speak to, we may write to; that which is written remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon, by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to pay him his tribute, and renew his submission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, ver. 3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it, because it was a message from God. Or perhaps because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

2. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of a letter at large follows here to ver. 24. In these verses.

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who indited the letter; Jeremiah was but the scribe or amanuensis. It would be comfortable to them in their captivity to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel still, a God in covenant with his people, though he contend with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them; this would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and disinherited them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God by him owns the hand he had in their captivity: *I have caused you to be carried away.* ver. 4. and again ver. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power against them, but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure he neither did them any wrong, nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God has appointed us to, *I opened not my mouth because thou didst it.*

3. He bids them think of no other but of settling there, and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it, ver. 5, 6. *Build ye houses and dwell in them,* &c. By all this it is intimated to them, (1.) That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of their captivity, for that would keep them still unsettled, and consequently uneasy; they would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves, and provoking their conquerors with the expectations of relief; and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair, and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be; let them therefore count upon a continuance there, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleasure in seeing their families built up and multiplied, for though they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, what should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but weep sometimes when they remember Zion, but let not weeping hinder sowing, let them not sorrow as those that have no hope, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life, it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have, because we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it strangely draws our minds, but it is with a *nequin quæ dulcedine*, we can give no good account of it; and therefore if providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live easy there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the earth be the Lord's, then wherever a child of God goes, he doth not go off his father's ground; *Patria est ubicunque bene est.* If things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are.

Non si male nunc, & olim fuerit.

(2.) That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest (as persons in trouble are always apt to make the worst of things) that it would be in vain to build houses, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of the vineyards they planted; never fear, saith God, if you live peaceably with them, you shall find them civil to you. Meek and quiet people, that work and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be pitied of those that carried them captives, Psalm cvi. 46. and pity it is, but that those who have built houses should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives, ver. 7. to pray for it, to endeavour it; this forbids them to at-

tempt any thing against the public peace, while they were subjects to the king of Babylon, though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet, while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance; and live *quiet and peaceable lives* under him, in all *godliness and honesty*, not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the place where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them, and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were *hurtful to kings and provinces*, and *moved sedition*, Ezra iv. 15. Both the wisdom of the serpent and the innocency of the dove, required them to be true to the government they lived under; for *in the peace thereof ye shall have peace*; should the country be embroiled in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for, and seek the peace of the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, *that in the peace thereof we and our's may have peace*. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

8. ¶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. 9. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. 10. ¶ For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. 11. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

1. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, ver. 8, 9. They told them their captivity should be short, and therefore they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: Now, herein, *they deceive you* (saith God) *they prophesy a lie unto you*, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them. As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits, it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. *Hearken not to your dreams, which ye caused to be dreamed*. He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads; by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations: Or the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people they are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for; they caused them to be dreamed, for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such flims upon them, desiring them to prophecy nothing but *smooth things*, Isa. xxx. 10. They were dreams of their own bespeaking. False prophets would not flatter the people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak their prophets fair to speak them fair.

2. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock ready for them to rebuild upon. God here promisseth them, that though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, *after seventy years be accomplished*. By this it appears, that the seventy years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that is the best time. The promise is, that God will visit them in mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors by coming to visit them: He will put an end to their captivity, and turn away all the calamities of it. Though they are dispersed, some in one country, and some in another, he will gather them from all the places whither they are driven, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and incorporate them again in one body. And though they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were carried captive, ver. 1-4.

Now, 1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them, ver. 10. *I will perform my good words towards you*. Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of those that really are from him. That which is indeed God's word is a good word, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. *Hath he said, and shall he not do it?* This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's good word to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in pursuance of God's purposes concerning them, ver. 11. *I know the thoughts that I think towards you*. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts, Acts xv. 18. and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he doth all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, not know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us: But he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are *thoughts of good and not of evil*; even that which seems evil is designed for good. His thoughts are all working towards the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, an expectation; so it is in the

original. (1.) He will give them to see the end, i. e. the comfortable period of their trouble, though it last long it shall not last always, the *time to favour Zion*, yea the *set time will come*; when things are at the worst they will begin to mend; and he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for as for God his work is perfect: He that in the beginning finished the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will make an end; God doth nothing by halves. (2.) He will give them to see the expectation, that end which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them not the expectations of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the end which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, ver. 12, 13, 14. (1.) God will stir them up to pray. *Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me*. Note, When God is about to give his people the expected good, he pours out a spirit of prayer, and it is a good sign he is coming towards them in mercy. Then when you see the expected end approaching, then ye shall call upon me. Note, Promises are given not to supersede but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when deliverance is coming, we must by prayer go forth to meet it. When Daniel understood that the seventy years were near expiring, then he set his face with more fervency than ever to seek the Lord, Dan. ix. 2, 3. (2.) He will then stir up himself to come and save them. *Psalm lxxx. 2. I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you*. God hath said it, and we may depend upon it, *seek and ye shall find*. We have a general rule laid down, ver. 13. *Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*. In seeking God we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope: We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search, and this we must do with our heart, i. e. in sincerity and uprightness, and with our wholeheart, i. e. with vigour and fervency, putting forth all that is within us in prayer, and those who thus seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder, Heb. xi. 6. He never said to such, *Seek ye me in vain*.

15 ¶ Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; 16. Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; 17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: 19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early, and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD. 20. ¶ Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: 21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; 22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; 23. Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbour's wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted the counsels and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them, and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to say, what needs he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us, *The Lord hath raised up prophets in Babylon*, ver. 15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem. See the impudent wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said they had them from God, so the people, when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets: Whereas those that harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, we may be sure are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them, that no more should be carried captive, but those who were in captivity should shortly return. Now in answer to this,

1. The prophet here foretels the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem, notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary. As for the king and people that dwell in the city, who, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived, they shall be followed with one judgment after another, the sword, famine, and pestilence, which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, ver. 16, 17. 18. And thus God will make them, or rather deal with them, like vile figs; they have made themselves so by their wickedness, and God will use them accordingly, as the salt that hath lost its savour, which being good for nothing is cast to the dunghill, and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision and the prophecy upon it, which we had, chap. xxiv. And the reason given for these proceedings against them, is the same that has often been given,

given, and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners, ver. 19. *Because they have not hearkened to my words; I called but they refused.*

2. He foretels the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up, ver. 20. Stand still and hear the doom of the prophets you are so fond of. The two prophets are named here, Ahab and Zedekiah, ver. 21. Observe, (1.) The crimes charged upon them, impiety and immorality: They prophesied lies in God's name, ver. 21. and again, ver. 23. they have spoken lying words in my name. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God to delude them into a false hope was worse; but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. And they that had the face to do that, no marvel if they could allow themselves in the gratification of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gave them up. They have done villainy in Israel, for they have committed adultery with their neighbour's wives. Adultery is villainy, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villainy in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickednesses manifestly disprove their own pretensions; God never sent such profligate wretches on his errands: He is the Lord God of the holy prophets, not of such impure ones. Here it appears why they flattered others in their sins, because they could not reprove them without condemning themselves. These lewd practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but I know it, and am a witness, saith the Lord. The most secret sins are known to God; he can see the villainy that is covered with the thickest cloak of hypocrisy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness, and every man will appear in his own colours. (2.) The judgments threatened against them, *The king of Babylon shall slay them before your eyes; nay, he shall put them to a miserable death, roast them in the fire,* ver. 22. We may suppose it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely, but sedition, and some attempts of their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner shall they end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, ver. 22. When men would imprecate the greatest evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse in fewer words than to say, *The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab!* Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at least of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and as such were tortured and slain; but their names were a blessing when they were gone, and their memory sweet, not as these here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

24. ¶ Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, 25. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26. The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and makest himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks. 27. Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? 28. For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long, build ye houses and dwell in them: and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 31. Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD, concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: 32. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among his people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

We have perused the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reason with a great deal of thanks to God and him to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treasures: But we cannot wonder if the false prophets they had among them were enraged at it, for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

1. How he discovers his malice against Jeremiah. This busy fellow is called *Shemaiah the Nehelamite*, the dreamer, so the margin reads it, because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God in a dream. He had got a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand and answer it, yea, that he will: But how? He doth not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah. He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it, but as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as it should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem, and the rest of the people, probably by the same messengers that brought the letter from Jeremiah: But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maaseiah, or of the twenty-fourth course of the priests, of which Maaseiah was the father and head. He was not the high-priest, but sagan or suffragan to the high-priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple; as Pashur, chap. xx. 1. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognisance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place, ver. 26. *The Lord hath made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest.* Some think he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Joash; and (saith Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is for spirit and zeal such another as he, and raised up, as he was, for the glory of God and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. Thus (saith he) there is no act so injurious or impious but that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some specious pretence of piety and zeal for God's glory, *Isa. lxvii. 5 John xvi. 2.* or rather it was some other Jehoiada, his immediate predecessor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the priests, ver. 1. Zephaniah is advanced sooner than he expected to this place of trust and power, and Shemaiah would have him think Providence had preferred him that he might persecute God's prophets, that he was come to this government for such a time as this, and he was unjust and ungrateful if he did not thus improve his power or rather abuse it. Their hearts are wretchedly hardened who can justify the doing of mischief by having a power to do it. These priests' business was to examine every man that is mad, and makes himself a prophet: God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay-intruders; and as men that were mad, acted by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets are thrown upon the true ones; and if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as mad-men and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes Jeremiah must be so done to. He doth not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, and could make it to appear he was not mad; no, that is taken for granted, and when once he is put into an ill name he must be run down of course.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives, ver. 29. He sent unto us in Babylon with the authority of a prophet, saying, *This captivity is long*, and therefore resolve to make the best of it. And what harm was there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said that the captivity would never come, chap. xiv. 13. Jeremiah had said it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him, who now said it would be long, rather than to them who said it would be short, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment against him; taking it for granted that he is mad, and makes himself a prophet; he expects they should order him to be put in prison and in the stocks, ver. 26. that they should thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace, possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping if they could gain that point, neither would the captives in Babylon be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect, ver. 27. *Why hast thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth?* See how insolent and imperious these false prophets were grown, that though they were in captivity they would give law to the priests that were not only at liberty but in power: It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours to be so. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, *lest our hearts be at any time hardened.* For here we find, (1.) That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had taken hold of them, *Zech. i. 6.* and yet because he doth not prophesy to them the smooth things they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those who will not see. (2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the most severe chastisement. They were now sent into a miserable thralldom for mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing his prophecies; this was the sin for which God now contended with them, and yet in their distress they trespass yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity, which shews that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sins, unless the grace of God work with them, but will rather exasperate the corruptions they are intended to mortify; so true is that of Solomon, *Prov. xxvii. 22. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*

2. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this, ver. 29. *Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah.* He did not design to do as Shemaiah would have him, but as it should seem, had a respect for Jeremiah, for we find him employed in messages to him as a prophet, chap. xxi. 1. and xxxvii. 3. and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power, stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the letter, that he might see what enemies he had even among the captives. Note, It is a kindness to our friends to let them know their foes.

3. What was the sentence past upon Shemaiah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cause: it was ordered to be sent not to him, but to them of the captivity, who encouraged and countenanced him, as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, ver. 31, 32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them, he promised them peace in God's name, but God did not send him, he forged a commission, and counterfeited the broad-seal of heaven to it, and made the people to trust in a lie, and by preaching false comfort to them, deprived them of true comfort: nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, he had made traitors of them, he had taught rebellion against the Lord, as Haniah had done, chap. xxviii. 16. And if vengeance shall be taken on them that rebel, much more on them that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example.

2. That at his end he also shall be a fool, as the expression is, chap. xvii. 11. his name and family shall be extinct, and shall be buried in oblivion: he shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree shall end in him; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, and neither he, nor any that come from him, shall behold the good that I will do for my people. Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to see the captives, to see the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be increased and not diminished, and therefore justly is he written childless there. Those that slight the blessing of God's word, deserve to lose the benefit of them. See *Amos vii. 16, 17.*

C H A P. XXX.

The sermon which we have in this and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all those before: The prophet doth indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most he had said hitherto was by way of reproof and threatening: but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and

and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah. The prophet is bid not only to preach this but to write it, because it is intended for the comfort of the generations to come, ver. 1, 2, 3. It is here promised, that they should hereafter have a joyful restoration. 1. Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror, ver. 4—7. 2. Though their oppressors were very strong, ver. 8, 9, 10. 3. Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored, ver. 11. 4. Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail and to be cut off, ver. 12, 13, 14. 5. Though God himself had sent them into captivity, and justly, for their sins, ver. 15, 16. 6. Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate, ver. 17. (2.) That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement; that their city should be rebuilt, ver. 18. Their numbers increased, ver. 19, 20. Their government established, ver. 21. God's covenant with them renewed, ver. 22. and their enemies destroyed and cut off, ver. 23, 24.

1. **THE** word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. 3. For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD; that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4. ¶ And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. 5. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness: 7. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. 8. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Here, 1. Jeremiah is directed to write what God had spoken to him; which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies; he must write them and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when in reading it they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not in a letter, as that in the chapter before to the captives, but in a book, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, Dan. ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers, for the days come, and are yet at a great distance, when I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah, great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, ver. 3. And it must be written that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers this prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated, that they shall be beloved for their fathers' sake, Rom. xi. 28. for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that he gave to their fathers, which therefore they shall possess.

2. He is directed what to write: The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teacheth, ver. 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order, are as truly his word, as the ten commandments which were written with his finger.

1. He must write a description of the fright and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the Chaldeans made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the welcomeness of their deliverance, ver. 5. We have heard a voice of trembling. The shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophet told them they should have peace, but there is fear, and not peace. So the margin reads it: And no marvel that when without are fightings, within are fears. The men, even the men of war shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like women in labour, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know they cannot escape them, ver. 6. You never heard of a man travelling with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but every man with his hands on his loins, in the utmost anguish and agony, as women in travail, when they see their cities burnt, and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a woman in travail, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a travelling woman, shall be forgotten. All Jews shall be turned into paleness. The word signifies not only such paleness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which the effect of an ill habit of body, the jaundice, or green sickness. The prophet laments the calamity upon the foresight of it, ver. 7. Alas, for that day is great, a day of judgment, which is called the great day, the great and terrible day of the Lord, Joel ii. 31. Judg. 6, great, so that there has been none like it. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparalleled, Matt. xxiv. 21. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, a sad time when God's professing people shall be in distress above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a time of Jacob's trouble, and such time, ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

2. He must write the assurance which God had given, that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities. (1.) Jacob's trouble shall cease, He shall be saved out of them. Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and shall be wrought for his church. (2.) Jacob's troubles shall be disabled to do him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, ver. 8. The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it, I will break his yoke from off thy neck, which has long lain so

heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee; I will burst thy bonds, and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shall no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee, shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possession or by thy labours. And, (3.) That which crowns and completes the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, ver. 9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large and do what they please, but that they may serve the Lord their God, and David their king, that they may come again into order under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they were brought into trouble, and made to serve their enemies, because they had not served the Lord their God as they ought to have done, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, Deut. xxviii. 47. But when the time is come that they should be saved out of their trouble, God will prepare and qualify them for it, by giving them a heart to serve him; and will make it doubly comfortable, by given them opportunity to serve him. Therefore we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve God, Luke i. 74, 75. And then deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when by them we find ourselves engaged to, and enlarged in the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostasy, nor compelled, as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve David their king, such governors as God should from time to time set over them, of the line of David, as Zerubbabel; or, at least, sitting on the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, as Nehemiah. But certainly this has a further meaning. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, they shall obey or hearken to the Messiah, or Christ the son of David their king. To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation, which commenced at their return out of captivity, brought them to the Messiah. He is called David their king, because he was the son of David, Matt. xxii. 42. and he answered to the name, Matt. xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the throne of his father David, he raised him up unto them, set them upon the holy hill of Zion. God is often in the New Testament said to have raised up Jesus, raised him up as a king, Acts iii. 26. and xviii. 23—33. Observe, (1.) Those that serve the Lord as their God must also serve David their king, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ to be ruled by him: For all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. (2.) Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage, must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest must take his yoke upon them.

10. ¶ Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. 11. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. 13. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. 15. Why criest thou for thine affliction: thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. 16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. 17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation wrought for them.

1. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them, ver. 11. He did all these things unto them, ver. 15. All their calamities came from his hands, whoever were the instruments, he was the principal agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spoke concerning them, to pull down and to destroy. Now, (1.) This was intended by him as a fatherly chastisement, and no other, ver. 11. I will correct thee in measure, or according to judgment, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear. What God doth against his people is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated and always proceeds from love, I will not leave thee altogether unpunished, as thou art ready to think I should, because of thy relation to me. Note, A profession of religion, though never so plausible, will be far from securing to us impunity in sin, God is no respecter of persons, but will shew his hatred of sin wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased, ver. 14, 15. Are our sorrows multiplied at any time, and do they increase? we must acknowledge it is because our sins have been multiplied, and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore troubles grow upon us. But (2.) What God intended as a fatherly chastisement, they and others interpreted as an act of hostility; they looked upon him as having wounded them with the wound of an enemy, and with the chastisement of a cruel one, ver. 14. as if he had designed their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction, nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their enemy, and had fought against them,

them, *Ist. lxxiii. 10.* Job complains that God was become cruel to him and multiplied his wounds. When troubles are great and long, we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God and his providence: His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear.

2. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them; none of those who had courted them in their prosperity would take notice of them now in their distress, *ver. 13.* It is commonly thus when families go to decay, those hang off from them that had been their hangers-on. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends, and need their service: 1. If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, our friends we expect should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us, when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves: but here *there is none to plead thy cause*, none to stand up in thy defence, none to intercede for thee with thine oppressors; therefore God will *plead their cause*, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of heaven, *Ist. lxxiii. 5.* 2. If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and, if occasion be, lend a hand for the applying of *healing medicines*; but here there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsels and comforts to make proper applications to thy case; nay, *ver. 14.* *All thy lovers have forgotten thee*: out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion and serious godliness in the world; those that, from their education, profession, and hopeful beginnings, one might have expected should have been its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence, nor will do any thing towards the healing of its wounds. Observe, *Thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee*: When God is against a people, who will be for them? who can be for them, so as to do them any kindness? See *Job xxx. 11.* Now, upon this account, their case seemed desperate and past relief, *ver. 12.* *Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound grievous*, and *ver. 15.* *thy sorrow is incurable*, i. e. the condition of the Jews in captivity was such, as no human power could redress the grievance of; there they were like a valley full of dead and dry bones, which nothing less than omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be restored to their own land and re-established there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their sorrow would not admit of any alleviation, but they seem to be hardened in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down, even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. *Thy sorrow is incurable, because thy sins*, instead of being repented of and forsaken, were increased. Note, Incurable griefs are owing to incurable lusts. Now in this deplorable condition they were looked upon with disdain, *ver. 17.* *They called thee an outcast*, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, *This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after*. When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that *an outcast*; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked the way to Zion, as formerly, *no man seeketh after it*. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity (and we read of *Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon*, *Zech. ii. 7.*) they called them *outcasts*; these are they who belong to Zion, and used to talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but *no man seeketh after them*, or enquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her.

3. For all this God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, nay, because no other hand can cure their wound, his will, and shall. 1. Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presence. *I will save thee*, *ver. 10.* *I am with thee to save thee*, *ver. 11.* When they are in their troubles, he is with them to save them from sinking under them; when the time is come for their deliverance, he is with them to be ready upon the first opportunity to save them out of their trouble. 2. Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, *exile off in the land of their captivity*, yet there shall salvation find them out, thence shall it fetch them, and their seed, for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may return, *ver. 10.* 3. Though they were now full of fears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they shall be in rest and quiet, safe and easy, and none shall make them afraid, *ver. 10.* 4. Though the nations into which they were dispersed should be brought to ruin, yet they should be preserved from that ruin, *ver. 11.* *Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee*, and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet *I will not make a full end of thee*. It was promised, that in the peace of these nations they should have peace, *chap. xxix. 7.* and yet in the destruction of these nations they should escape destruction. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he will not make a full end of it, *chap. v. 10-18.* 5. Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgressions and mighty sins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their sin shall not prevent their deliverance, when God's time is come. 6. Though their adversaries were mighty, God will bring them down and break their power, *ver. 16.* *All that devour thee shall be devoured*, and thus Zion's cause will be pleaded, and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cause: Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the destruction of her oppressors; and thus her enemies will be recompensed for all the injury they have done her; for *there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, a God to whom vengeance belongs; they shall every one of them, without exception, go into captivity, and they that now spoil thee, the day will come when they shall be a spoil; they that lead into captivity, shall go into captivity, *Rev. xiii. 10.* This might serve to oblige the present conquerors to use their captives well, because the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they also should be captives, and let them do now as they would then be done by. 7. Though the wound seem incurable, God will make a cure of it, *ver. 17.* *I will restore health unto thee*. Be the disease never so dangerous, the patient is safe if God undertake the cure.

4. Upon the whole matter they are cautioned against inordinate fear and grief, for in these precious promises there is enough to silence both. 1. They must not tremble as those that have no hope in the apprehension of future further trouble, that might threaten them, *ver. 10.* *Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, neither be dismayed*. Note, Those that are God's servants must not give way to disquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them. 2. They must not sorrow as those that have no hope, for the troubles which at present they lay under, *ver. 15.* *Why criest thou for thine affliction?* It is true thy carnal confidences fail thee, creatures are physicians of no value, but *I will heal thy wound*, and therefore, *Why criest thou?* Why dost thou fret and complain thus? It is for thy sin, *ver. 14, 15.* and therefore, instead of repining thou shouldst be repenting; *Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sins?* The issue will be good at last, and therefore rejoice in hope.

18. ¶ Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy
Vol. II. No. CXXVI.

on his dwelling-places: and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. 19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. 20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. 21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD. 22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 23. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continual whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. 24. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days he shall consider it.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them after the days of their calamity were over. It is promised,

1. That the city and temple should be rebuilt, *ver. 18.* *Jacob's tents*, and his dwelling-places, felt the effects of the captivity, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives; but when they are returned the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins, and therein God will have mercy upon their dwelling-places, that had been monuments of his justice: Then the cry of Jerusalem shall be built upon her own heap, her own hill, though now it be no better than a ruinous heap. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can make of a city a heap, *Ist. xxv. 1.* can, when he pleaseth, make of a heap a city again. The palace, i. e. the temple, God's palace, shall remain after the manner thereof, it shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

2. That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized, *ver. 19.* *Out of the city*, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry. They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple-service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of thanksgiving is the same with the voice of them that make merry; for whatever is the matter of our joy, should be the matter of our praise: *Is any merry? let him sing psalms*. What makes us cheerful, let it make us thankful: *Serve the Lord with gladness*.

3. That the people should be multiplied and increased, and made considerable; they shall not be few, they shall not be small; but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations; for *I will multiply them*, and *I will glorify them*; it is for the honour of the church to have many added to it that shall be saved: this would make them to be of some weight among their neighbours: Let a people be never so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to their former honour, their children shall be as aforetime, playing in the streets, *Zech. viii. 5.* they shall inherit their parents estates and honours as formerly; and their congregations shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me: There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints: As one generation passeth away, another shall be raised up, and so the congregation shall be established before God.

4. That they shall be blessed with a good government, *ver. 21.* *Their nobles and judges shall be of themselves*, of their own nation, and they shall no longer be ruled by strangers and enemies, their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, shall be one that has been a sharer with them in the afflictions of their captive state; and this has reference to Christ our governor, *David our king*, *ver. 9.* he is of ourselves, in all things made like unto his brethren; and *I will cause him to draw near*. This may be understood, either, (1.) Of the people, Jacob and Israel, *I will cause them to draw near to me in the temple-service*, as formerly, to come into covenant with me, as my people, *ver. 22.* to approach to me in communion, for who hath engaged his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, to approach unto me? How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God, causing them to draw near. Note, Whenever we approach to God in any holy ordinance, we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept close to it: The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires, but it is deceitful and will start aside, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it to bind this sacrifice with cords. Or, (2.) It may be understood of the governor, for it is a single person that is spoken of; their governor shall be duly called to his office, shall draw near to God to consult him upon all occasions; God will cause him to approach him, for otherwise, who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up instruments to do it. But it looks farther to Christ, to him as Mediator. Note, 1. The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is to draw near and approach unto God, not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the High-priest of our profession: The priests are said to draw nigh to God, *Lev. x. 3.* and *xxi. 17.* *Moses drew near*, *Exod. xx. 21.* 2. God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and approach to him as Mediator: He commanded and appointed him to do it, he sanctified and sealed him, anointed him for this purpose, and accepted of him, and declared himself well pleased in him. 3. Jesus Christ being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, i. e. he bound and obliged himself to it, undertook for his heart, so some read it; for his soul, that, in the fullness of time, it should be made an offering for sin: His own voluntary susception, in compliance with his Father's will, and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and resolute, free and cheerful in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, *Ist. lxxiii. 3, 4, 5.* 4. Jesus Christ was in all this truly wonderful: we may well ask with admiration, *Who is this that thus engageth his heart to such an undertaking?*

5. That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers, *ver. 22.* *Ye shall be my people*, and it is God's good work in us that makes us to him a people, a people for his name,

Acts xv. 14. *and I will be your God*; and it is his good-will to us that is the summary of that part of the covenant.

6. That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down, *ver. 28. I will punish all them that oppress them*, so that it shall appear to all a dangerous thing to touch God's anointed, Psalm cv. 15. The two last verses come under this head. *The whirlwind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.* These two verses we had before, chap. xxii. 19, 20. there they were a denunciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here, against the wicked oppressors of Israel; the expressions exactly agreeing, speak the same with that, *Ish. li. 22, 23. I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee.* The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be, 1. Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising and irresistible. 2. Very grievous, it shall fall with pain upon their heads, they shall be as ill hurt as frightened. 3. It shall pursue them; whirlwinds use to be short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind. 4. It shall accomplish that for which it is sent, the anger of the Lord shall not return, till he have done it; the purposes of his wrath, as well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will perform the intents of his heart: And, 5. Those that will not lay this to heart now, will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it, *in the latter days ye shall consider it*, when it will be too late to prevent it.

C H A P. XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfortable words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time return them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment. 1. They shall be restored to peace and honour, and joy; and great plenty, *ver. 1—14.* 2. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* 3. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* 4. They shall be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been, *ver. 21—30.* 5. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings, *ver. 31—34.* 6. These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever, *ver. 35, 36, 37.* 7. As an earnest of this, the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, *ver. 38, 39, 40.* These exceeding great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope, and full fountains of joy, to the poor captives; and we also may apply them to ourselves, and mix faith with them.

1. **A**T the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. 2. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. 3. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me: saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. 4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. 6. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. 7. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. 8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. 9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

God here assures his people,

1. That he will again take them into a covenant relation to himself from which they seemed to have been cut off. At the same time, when God's anger breaks out against the wicked, chap. xxx. 24. his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love: *I will be the God, i. e. I will shew myself to be the God of all the families of Israel, ver. 1.* not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes; not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; yet only their state in general but their particular families, and the interests of them shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family capacity, may apply themselves to God and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, *Prov. iii. 33.*

2. That he will do for them in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he had delivered them out of Egypt, as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people. (1.) He puts them in mind what he did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, *ver. 2.* they were then, as these were, a people left of the sword, that sword of Pharaoh, with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped, and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off, when he pursued them to the Red sea: They were then in the wilderness, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as these were now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blest with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to cause them to rest in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember, that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet it

has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness: and God is still the same. (2.) They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating, that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* *ver. 3.* It is true, *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me*, in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me, and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God; the years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise, what good will it do us, that he appeared of old to us, when now he is a God that hides himself from us? *Ish. xlv. 15.* Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles under present frowns. (3.) To this he answers, with an assurance of the constancy of his love, *Yea, I have loved thee*, not only with an ancient love, but with an everlasting love, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is an everlasting love, therefore have I extended or drawn out loving-kindness unto thee also, as well as to thine ancestors; or, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hast turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those, who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is an everlasting-love; from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it; and that nothing can separate them from that love: And those whom God loves with this love, he will draw them into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls: he will draw them with loving-kindness, with the cords of a man, and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

3. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, *ver. 4, 5.* Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built.* Are the parts of this building dispersed? they shall be collected, and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. Is Israel a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but *thou shalt again be adorned, and made fine, adorned with thy tabrets, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry:* They shall resume their harps which had been hung upon the willow-trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them: They shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable, it shall be a proper time for it. God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them: Or, it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their going forth in dances then, as the daughters of Shiloh, *Jud. xxi. 19—21.* And then our mirth is indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God, and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised, *ver. 5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria*, which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united, *Ezek. xxxvii. 22.* and there shall be such perfect peace and security, that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; the planters shall plant, not fearing the soldiers coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves shall eat them freely, as common things, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, as they were till the fifth year, *Lev. xix. 13, 14, 15.* not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

4. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so, *ver. 6. There shall be a day*, and a glorious day it will be, when the watchmen upon mount Ephraim, that are set to stand sentinel there to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may go up to Zion, to praise God for the public peace. Or, the watchmen that tend the vineyards spoken of, *ver. 5.* shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go and keep the solemn feasts at Jerusalem. Now this implies, that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, *Psal. cxxii. 1.* But that which is most observable here is, that the watchmen of Ephraim are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas, when time was, the watchmen of Ephraim was hated against the house of his God, *Hos. ix. 8.* and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, *Hos. v. 1.* Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion, and the true worship of God, to become encouragers of it and leaders in it. The promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all those countries, and a general invitation thereby given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

5. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort of this blessed change, *ver. 7. Sing with gladness for Jacob*, i. e. let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, *Deut. xxxii. 43. Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people*, *Rom. xv. 10.* The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect and put a reputation upon him: Even the chief of the nations, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. *Publish ye, praise ye;* in publishing these tidings praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must do it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the *Psalms*, as mingled with praises, *Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3.* and *xvii. 2, 3.* What we either bring to others, or take to ourselves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of, *Praise ye, and say, Lord, save thy people*, i. e. perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel, that are yet in bondage, as *Psal. cxxvi. 3, 4.* Note, When we are praising God for what he has done, we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of; and in praying to him we really praise him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

6. That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable passage homeward, *ver. 8, 9.* and this beginning of mercy should be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. 1. Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are, God will find them out. 2. Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them, the blind and the lame shall come, such a good will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind, and legs to the lame; as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, *Job xxix. 15.* But above all, their

their God will help them; and let none plead he is blind, that has God for his guide; or lame, that has God for his strength. *The women with child* are heavy, and it is not fit they should undertake such a journey, much less those *that travail with child*; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls, we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. 3. Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet when they all come together they shall be a great company; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock. 4. Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery, *ver. 9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications, weeping for sin, supplication for pardon; for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance*; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. *Weeping and praying* do well together; tears put life into prayers and express the liveness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears. *With favours will I lead them*, so the margin reads it; in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favour, the fruits of his favour. 5. Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine conduct and convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters*, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? *I will cause them to walk in a straight way*, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? yet *they shall not stumble*. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them, or make them a ready way; and while we are following providence, we may be sure providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; *for I am a father to Israel*, a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him, *Psal. ciii. 13. and Ephraim is my first-born, even Ephraim*, that, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, yet shall be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt, is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born, and therefore must not be enslaved; are born to God, and therefore must not be the servants of men, *Exod. iv. 22, 33. Israel is my son, my first-born, let my son go, that he may serve me*. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

10. ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. 11. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. 12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. 13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice for their sorrow. 14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD. 15. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. 16. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. 17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

This paragraph is much to the same purpose with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a word of the Lord, which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord, which the nations cannot but take notice of: Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance: And let them that hear it themselves declare it to others, *declare it in the isles afar off*: It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over: It will look very great in history, let us see how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

1. That those that are dispersed shall be brought together again from their dispersions: *He that scattered Israel will gather him*; for he knows whither he scattered them, and therefore where to find them, *ver. 10. Una cademque manus vultus opemque tulit*. And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock, from being scattered again.

2. That those that are sold and alienated shall be redeemed and brought back, *ver. 11*. Though the enemy that had got possession of him was stronger than he, yet the Lord, who is stronger than all, hath redeemed and ransomed him, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptians hands.

3. That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, *ver. 12, 13*. When they are returned to their own land, *they shall come and sing in the high place of Zion*; on the top of that holy mountain, they shall sing to the praise and glory of God: We read they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there, they sang together, praising and giving thanks to the Lord; *Ezra iii. 11. They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord*, i. e. they shall flock in great numbers, and with great forwardness and cheerfulness as streams of water, to the goodness of the Lord, i. e. to the temple, where he causeth his goodness to pass before the people: They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, which, now they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in, and

the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant love. And having plenty, plenty out of want and scarcity, they shall greatly rejoice, *their soul shall be as a watered garden*, flourishing and fruitful, *Isa. lviii. 11*. pleasant and fragrant, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens, but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise that follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that *they shall not sorrow any more at all*; for it is only in that new Jerusalem that all tears shall be wiped away, *Rev. xxi. 4*. however, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives that they had not any more those causes for sorrow that they had had; and therefore, *ver. 13. young men and old shall rejoice together*; so grave shall the young men be in their joys, as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be, as to associate with the young. *Sulva res est, fultat senex*. God will turn their mourning into joy, their fasts into solemn feasts, *Zeck. viii. 19*. It was in the return out of Babylon, that they who *flowed in tears*, were made to *reap in joy*, *Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6*. Those are comforted indeed, whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles, when he makes them to rejoice from their sorrow; not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it; their joy shall borrow lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles, the more shall they rejoice in their deliverance.

4. That both the ministers, and those they minister to, shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them, *ver. 14. I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness*, i. e. there shall be such plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar, that they who live upon the altar shall live very comfortably, they and their families shall be satiated with fatness, they shall have enough, and that of the best; and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy, and so there is: God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world: Let them be satisfied of God's loving-kindness, and they will be satisfied with it, and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jesus Christ, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

5. That those particularly, who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children that were carried into captivity should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, *ver. 15, 16, 17*. Here we have,

(1.) The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children, *ver. 15. In Ramah was there a voice heard*, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but lamentation, and bitter weeping, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, *chap. xl. 1*. where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. Rachel is there said to weep for her children. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem: Benjamin one of the two tribes, and Ephraim head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and refused to be comforted, *Gen. xxxvii. 35*. the other she herself called Benoni, the son of my sorrow. Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner grieve for their sons and their daughters that were carried away, as *1 Sam. xxx. 6*. and such a voice of lamentation was there, as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies, they were never likely to see them more. This is applied by their evangelists to the great mourning that was at Bethlehem for the murder of the infants there by Herod, *Matt. ii. 17, 18*. and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, and would not be comforted, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, because they were not. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not.

(2.) Seasonable comfort administered to them, in reference hereunto, *ver. 16, 17*. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it; *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thy eyes from tears*. We are not forbidden to mourn in such a case, allowances are made for natural affection, but we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, to take us off from our duty to him; though we mourn, we must not murmur, nor must we resolve as Jacob did, to go to the grave mourning; and to repress inordinate grief, we must consider, that there is hope in our end, hope that there will be an end, the troubles will not last always, that it will be a happy end, the end will be peace. Note, It ought to support us under our troubles, that we have reason to hope they will end well: The righteous has hope in his death, but that will be the blessed period of his griefs, and the blessed passage to his joys. There is hope for thy posterity, so some read it; though thou mayest not live to see these glorious days thyself, there is hopes that thy posterity shall: Though one generation falls in the wilderness, the next shall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayest comfort thyself with the hope of, 1. The reward of thy work; thy suffering work shall be rewarded: The comforts of the deliverance shall be sufficient to balance all the grievances of the captivity. God makes his people glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them, and so there is a proportion between the joys and the sorrows, as between the reward and the work. The glory to be revealed, which the saints hope for in their end, will abundantly countervail the sufferings of this present time, *Rom. viii. 18*. 2. The restoration of thy children. They shall come again from the land of the enemy, *ver. 16. they shall come again to their own border*, *ver. 17. There is hope that children at a distance may be brought home*: Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph, after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death, that they shall return to their own border, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God, when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before.

18. ¶ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. 19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. 23. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels

bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. 21. Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the high-way, ~~even~~ the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. 22. ¶ How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. 23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. 24. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. 25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. 26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,

1. Ephraim's repentance and return to God. Not only Judah but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, *Hos. xiv. 8. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* Ephraim the people is here spoken of as a single person, to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed, that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit, *mourned for his children many days*, 1 Chron. vii. 21. 22. and sorrow for sin is compared to that for an only son. This penitent is here brought in, (1.) Bemoaning himself, and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. (2.) Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He chargeth upon himself in the first place that sin, which his conscience told him he was more especially guilty of at this time; and that was, impatience under correction. *Thou hast chastised me*; I have been under the rod, and I needed it; I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock who had never felt the goad if he had not first rebelled against the yoke. True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements. *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*, i. e. it was well I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it: or it may speak his unaffectionedness under the affliction, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*, that was all, not I was awakened by it, and quickened by it: I looked no farther than the chastisement. *I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, unruly and unmanageable, *kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net*, Isa. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now, but, *ver. 19.* he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers the reproach of his youth. Ephraim, as a people, reflects upon the miscarriages of their ancestors, when they were first formed into a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves, and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame. 3. He is here brought in angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly; *he smote upon his thigh*, as the publican upon his breast; he was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and forwardness, *he was ashamed, yea, even confounded*, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself. 4. He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he is revolted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*; which implies, that unless God do turn him by his grace he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See chap. xvii. 1-4. *Heal me, and I shall be healed*. God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul it will be converted. 5. He is here pleading himself with the experience he had had of the blessed effect of divine grace, *Surely after that I was turned, I repented*. Note, All the pious workings of our hearts towards God, are the fruit and consequence of the powerful workings of his grace in us. And observe, *He was turned*, he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself, is by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon: *After that I was instructed I yielded, I smote upon my thigh*. When sinners come to a right knowledge, they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no farther; *I was chastised*, and that was all; But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he *smote upon his thigh*, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

2. God's compassion to Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, *ver. 20.* (1.) He owns him for a child, though he has been an undutiful child and a prodigal: *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as one whom his mother comforts, though she had chidden him, *Isa. lxvi. 13. Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child?* Is it he that is thus sad in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, 1 Sam. xxvi. 17. *Is this thy voice, my son David?* Or, as it is sometimes supplied, *Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?* Yes, now, he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him: had rebased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal, who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet, by his father, had the best robe put upon him, and a ring on his hand. (2.) He relents towards him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion; *Since I spake against him*, by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, *I do earnestly remember him still*, my thoughts towards him are thoughts of

peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yea he doth not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he doth not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that *the Lord thinketh upon us*, though we have forgotten him. *I remember him still*, and therefore *my bowels are troubled for him*, as Joseph's yearned towards his brethren, even then when he *spoke roughly* to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent concession and submission, it is said his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, *Judges x. 16.* for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment: *My heart is turned within me*, *Hos. xi. 8, 9.* and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, *ver. 18. Thou art the Lord my God*, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shews it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God and not man, and that he is his God. (3.) He resolves to do him good; *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*. Note, God hath mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him and submit to him. And the more we are afflicted for sin, the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

3. Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon, to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble and lose their spirits: let them not trifle and lose their time; but with a firm resolution and close application address themselves to their journey, *ver. 21, 22.* (1.) They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven, *Turn again, O virgin of Israel*, a virgin to be again espoused to thy God, *turn again to these thy cities*; though they are laid waste and in ruins, they are *thy cities*, which thy God gave thee, and therefore *turn again* to them. They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion. (2.) They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows that attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Those that have departed from God into the bondage of sin, must return by the same way in which they went astray, to the same duties they neglected, must *do their first works*. (3.) They must engage themselves, and all that is within them in this affair. *Set their heart towards the high-way*; bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, thine interest, and go about it with a good will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, it is a high-way; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well tracked, *Isa. xxxv. 8.* yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they *set their heart towards it*. (4.) They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for the journey, *Set thee up way-marks, and make thee high heaps or pillars*; send before to have such set up in all places where is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow. (5.) They must compose themselves for their journey, *How long wilt thou go about, O backsliding daughter?* Let not their minds fluctuate, or be uncertain about it, but resolve upon it; let them not put themselves into a toils with care and fear, let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, nor hurry here and there in courting them, which had often been an instance of their backsliding from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. (6.) They are encouraged to do this by an assurance God gives them, that he would *create a new thing*, strange and surprising, *in the earth*, in that land, *a woman shall compass a man*. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous spirit, yet shall *surround, besiege, and prevail*, against a mighty man, *Isa. liv. 6.* The church is compared to a woman, *Rev. xii. 1.* And whereas we find *armies compassing the camp of the saints*, *Rev. xx. 9.* now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this *new thing* created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, *Isa. vii. 14.* and *ix. 6.* *A woman*, the virgin Mary, inclosed in her womb the mighty one, for so Geber, the word here used, signifies; and God is called Gibbor, the mighty God, *Jer. xxxii. 18.* and so is Christ there where his incarnation is spoken of, as it is supposed to be here, *Isa. ix. 6.* He is El-Gibbor, the mighty God. Let this assure them, that God would not cast off this people, for that blessing was to be among them, *Isa. lxxv. 8.*

4. A comfortable prospect given them of a happy settlement in their own land again. (1.) They shall have an interest in the esteem and good will of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word, and put a good prayer for them, *ver. 23.* *As yet, or rather, yet again* (though Judah and Jerusalem have long been an astonishment and an billing) *this speech shall be used*, as it was formerly, concerning the land of Judah, and the cities thereof *The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness*. This intimates, that they shall return much reformed, and every way better; and this reformation shall be so conspicuous, that all about them shall take notice of it. The cities, that used to be nests of pirates, shall be *habitations of justice*, the mountain of Israel (so the whole land is called, *Psal. lxxviii. 54.*) and especially mount Zion, shall be a *mountain of holiness*. Observe, justice towards men, and holiness towards God, must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, or to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure preface of farther happiness. And we may with great comfort pray for the blessing of God upon those houses that are *habitations of justice*, those cities and countries that are *mountains of holiness*. There the Lord will undoubtedly *command the blessing*. (2.) There shall be great plenty of all good things among them, *ver. 24, 25.* *There shall dwell in Judah itself*, even in it, though it has now long lain waste, both *husbandmen and shepherds*, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, *Gen. iv. 2.* It is comfortable dwelling in a *habitation of justice*, and a *mountain of holiness*. And the husbandmen and shepherds shall eat of the fruit of their labours, for I have *satiated the weary and sorrowful soul*, i. e. they that came weary from their journey, and have been long sorrowful in their captivity, shall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy; they shall be abundantly satisfied with divine graces and comforts: in the love and favour of God the weary soul shall find rest, and the sorrowful soul joy.

Lastly, The prophet tells us what pleasure the discovery of this brought to his mind, *ver. 26.* The forethoughts God had given him sometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem, were an exceeding pain to him, as *chap. iv. 19.* but these views were pleasing ones, though at a distance. *Upon this I awaked*, overcome with joy, which burst the fetters of sleep; and I reflected upon my dream, and it was such as made *my sleep sweet to me*; I was refreshed, as men used to be with quiet sleep. Those may sleep sweetly that lie down and rise up in the favour of God and in communion with him; nor is any prospect in this world more pleasing to good men and good

good ministers, than that of the flourishing state of the church of God. What can we see with more satisfaction, than the good of Jerusalem all the days of our life and peace upon Israel.

27. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. 28. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. 29. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a four grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. 30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the four grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. 31. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:) 33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The prophet having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of farther discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here farther promised,

1. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous: Both Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, *ver. 27.* They shall increase and multiply like a field sown with corn; and this is the product of God's blessing, *ver. 23.* for whom God blessed, to them he said, *Be fruitful.* This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel church: God will build them, and plant them, *ver. 28.* He will watch over them to do them good, i. e. no opportunity shall be lost; that they may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences did conspire to ruin them, that it seemed as if God had watched over them, to pluck up, and to throw down: but now every thing that falls out shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them.

2. That they shall be reckoned with no farther for the sins of their fathers, *ver. 29, 30.* They shall say no more, i. e. they shall have no occasion to say, that God visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children, which God had done in the captivity; for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh; this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding, and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, *Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.* But it is here promised, that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end; that God would proceed no farther in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them in his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant: They shall no more complain, as they have done, that the fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge: which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings, but every one shall die for his own iniquity still; though God would cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public salvations will give no impunity, no security to private sinners; still every man that eats the four grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly soever it looks, will find it a four grape, and it will set their teeth on edge, sooner or later they will feel from it, and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a tendency in sin to make a man uneasy, as there is in four grapes to set the teeth on edge.

3. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel times, the latter days that shall come, for of the gospel grace the apostle understands it, *Heb. viii. 1—9, &c.* where this whole passage is quoted, as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe.

(1.) Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made, with the house of Israel and Judah, i. e. with the gospel church, the Israel of God, on which peace shall be, *Gal. vi. 16.* with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them, so Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church and covenant.

(2.) What is the nature of this covenant in general, it is a new covenant, and not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt; not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocency, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created: No; that was for substance a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel times. Sinners were saved by that covenant upon their repentance and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood confirming that covenant was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, *Exod. xxiv. 7, 8,* yet this may upon many accounts be called new in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he took them by the hand, as if they had been blind or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt.

which covenant they broke. Observe, it was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that break it, for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin is of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God was a husband to them, that he had espoused them to himself, it was a marriage covenant that was between him and them, which they broke by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departures from God, that he has been a husband to us, a loving, tender, careful husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

(3.) What are the particular articles of this covenant; they all contain spiritual blessings, not, I will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue, but I will give them pardon and peace, and grace, good heads, and good hearts. He promiseth,

1. That he will incline them to their duty: *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart:* Not, I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes) for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, *Prov. iii. 3.* He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about, is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

2. That he will take them into relation to himself: *I will be their God,* a God all-sufficient to them, and they shall be my people, a loyal obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness, heaven itself is no more, *Heb. xi. 16. Rev. xxi. 3.* Our being to him a people, may be taken either as the condition on our part; those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people, or as a farther branch of the promise, that God will by his grace make us his people, a willing people, in the day of his power, and whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

3. That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good, for they that rightly know God's name will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him, *ver. 34.* All shall know me; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; his way shall be known upon earth; whereas, for many ages, in Judah only was God known. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest than they had been, while Moses had a veil upon his face. There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolical expression (and the dullness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them) designed only to shew, that the knowledge of God in gospel times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law. Or, perhaps it intimates, that in gospel times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, steadily and constantly, by men authorized and appointed to preach the word in season, and out of season, much beyond what was under the law; and there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, to a few in comparison, but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it (Mr. Gataker mentions it) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God, that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation, than by any means of instruction. In short, the things of God shall, by the gospel of Christ, be brought to a clearer light than ever, *2 Tim. i. 10.* and the people of God shall, by the grace of Christ, be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, *Eph. i. 17, 18.*

4. That in order to all these blessings sin shall be pardoned; this is made the reason of all the rest; for I will forgive their iniquity, will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, will forgive and forget, I will remember their sin no more. It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is his name. 36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the LORD. 38. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. 39. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. 40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields under the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the LORD, it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel church, which that epocha of the Jewish church, that was to commence at the return from captivity, would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishment in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us is, that while the world stands God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, yet shall be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

it. Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this matter; the building of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

1. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, is an evidence of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. *He that built all things at first is God*, Heb. iii. 4. and the same is he that makes all things new. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for *this is as the waters of Noah*, Isa. liv. 9. Let us observe here,

(1.) The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer from thence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, 1. Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first mover and supreme director of. *He giveth the sun for a light by day*, ver. 35. not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so, for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, their motions are called ordinances, both because they are regular and by rule, and because they are determined and under rule: See Job xxxviii. 31, 32, 33. 2. Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows; *the Lord of hosts divideth the sea*, or, as some read it, *settles the sea*, when the waves thereof rear, (*divide & impera*) when it is most tossed, God keeps it within compass, Jer. v. 22. and soon quiets it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controuling the regular motions of the seas. 3. Take notice of the vastness of the heavens, and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God who manageth such a great world as this is; *the heavens above cannot be measured*, ver. 37. and yet God fills them. 4. Take notice of the mysteriousness even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast, and which we most are conversant with. *The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath*, for the Creator *hudgeth the earth upon nothing*, Job xxvi. 7. and we know not how the foundations thereof are fastened, Job xxxviii. 6. 5. Take notice of the immoveable steadfastness of all these, ver. 36. *These ordinances cannot depart from before God*: he hath all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he hath established them and they abide, *abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants*, Psalm cxix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed: Herein we must acknowledge the power and goodness, and faithfulness of the Creator.

(2.) The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence: we may be confident of this very thing, that *the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation*, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel church shall be a holy nation, a peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation, the children of the promise are counted for the seed, Rom. ix. 8. and God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, no, not for all that they have done, though they have done very wickedly, ver. 37. He justly might cast them off, but he will not, Though he cast them out from their land and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all; to this the apostle seems to refer, Rom. xi. 5. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid that we should think so!* for, ver. 5. *At this time there is a remnant*, enough to save the credit of the promise, that God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this, by considering, 1. That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church, is a God of almighty power, that *upholds all things by his almighty word*. *Our help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth*, and therefore can do any thing. 2. That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it, and how shall he have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that shall be to him for a name and a praise? 3. That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm, because it was well fixed at first and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue inviolable, as it was at first well settled. 4. That he who hath promised to preserve a church for himself, has approved himself faithfully to the word which he has spoken, concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an everlasting covenant, Gen. ix. 9—16. we may be sure will not be false to his covenant with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an everlasting covenant. Even that which they have done, though they have done much amiss, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See Psalm lxxxix. 30, &c.

2. The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that, shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel-church, the heavenly Jerusalem, ver. 30, 31, 32. *The days will come*, though they may be long in coming, (1.) When Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was, the dimensions are here exactly described, by the places through which the circumference passed; and, no doubt, the wall which Nehemiah built and which, the more punctually to fulfill the prophecy, began about the tower of Hananeel, here mentioned, Neh. iii. 1. inclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called *the gates of the corner, the hill Garah, &c.* (2.) When, being built, it shall be consecrated to God and to his service: *It shall be built to the Lord*, ver. 31. and even the suburbs and fields adjacent shall be holy unto the Lord. It shall not be polluted with idols as formerly, but God shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which therefore has no temple, because it is all temple. (3.) Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, and then devoted to the praise of God, *it shall not be plucked up, or thrown down any more for ever*, i. e. it shall continue very long; the time of the new city from the return to its last destruction, being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men shall not pluck it up, or throw it down: It may lie waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm and gain its point, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

C H A P. XXXII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of king Zedekiah, ver. 1—5. 2. We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles, ver. 6—15. 3. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion, ver. 16—25. 2. We have a message that God thereupon intrusted him to deliver to the people. (1.) He must foretel the

utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, ver. 26—35. But, (2.) At the same time he must assure them, that, though the destruction was total, it should not be final; but at length their posterity should recover the peaceable possession of their own land, ver. 36—41. The predictions of this chapter, both threatenings and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with, again and again, but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, 2. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. 3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it? 4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes. 5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. 6. ¶ And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 7. Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. 8. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine, buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. 10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. 11. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: 12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. 13. ¶ And I charged Baruch before them, saying, 14. Thus saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel. Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. 15. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

It appears by the date of this chapter, that we are now coming very nigh to that fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; God's judgments came gradually upon them, but they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what is here recorded happened in the tenth. The king of Babylon's army had now invested Jerusalem, and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting, but in a little time to make themselves masters of it, while the besieged had taken up a desperate resolution not to surrender, but to hold it out to the last extremity. Now,

1. Jeremiah prophesied, that both the city and the court shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly, that the besiegers should take the city as prize, for God, whose city it was, in a peculiar manner will give it into their hands, and put it out of his protection, ver. 3. that though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overtaken, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar; shall be brought into his presence to his great confusion and terror, he having made himself so obnoxious by breaking his faith with him; he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom: and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him; *his eyes shall behold his eyes*, ver. 4. That Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, until God visit him, i. e. till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before put an end to his days, by putting out his eyes. Note, Those that live in misery, may be truly said to be visited in mercy, when God by death takes them home to himself. And, lastly, he foretels that all their attempts to force the besiegers from their trenches should be ineffectual. *Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper*; how should they, when God did not fight for them? ver. 5. See chap. xxiv. 2, 3.

2. For prophesying thus he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more credible prison that was within the verge of the palace, in the king of Judah's house, and there not closely confined, but in custodia libera, in the court of the prison, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would he sheltered from the abuses of the mob; but however, it was a prison, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, ver. 2, 3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12. that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet, as to desire him to enquire of the Lord for them, chap. xxi. 2. yet now he chides him for prophesying, ver. 8. and shuts him up

in prison, perhaps not with design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from prophesying any further, which was crime bad enough, Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so ill as mocking and killing them, yet is a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins for which God was now contending with them, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

3. Being in prison, he purchaseth a piece of ground from a near relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, *ver. 6, 7, &c.* One would not have expected, (1.) That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world; but why not? Though ministers must not entangle themselves, yet they may concern themselves in the affairs of this life. (2.) That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land, we find *chap. xvi. 2.* that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children of his relation when he dies. (3.) One would little have thought that a prisoner should be a purchaser; how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probable he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay, (4.) It was most strange of all that he should buy a *piece of land*, when he himself knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, and then what good will this do him? But it was the will of God he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer it him; it was not of his own seeking; he coveted not to lay house to house and field to field, but providence brought it to him, and it is likely it was a good bargain; besides, the *right of redemption* belonged to him, *ver. 8.* and if he refused, he did not do the kinsman's part. It is true he might lawfully refuse, but being a prophet, in a thing of this nature, he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession; *it became him to fulfill all righteousness.* It was a land that lay within the suburbs of a priest's city, and if he should refuse it, there was danger lest in these times of disorder, it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who probably was at this time in a great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had he was willing to lay it out in such a manner, as might tend most to the honour of God and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests. Observe,

1. How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hana-meel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that *it was the word of the Lord*, that it was his mind he should make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but *bought the field.* And, (1.) He was very honest and exact in paying the money: He *weighed him the money*, did not press him to take it upon content, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was *seventeen shekels of silver*, amounting to about forty shillings of our money. It is likely it was but a little field, and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low: besides, the *right of inheritance* was in Jeremiah, so that he was only to buy out his kinsman's life, the reversion was his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price, if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were counted upon. (2.) He was very prudent and discreet in preserving the writings: They were subscribed *before witnesses*, one copy was *sealed up*, the other was *open*. One was the original, the other the counter-part; or perhaps that which was *sealed up*, was for his own private use, the other that was *open* was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances, for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution in things of this nature, might prevent a great deal of injustice and contention. The deeds of purchase were lodged in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an *earthen vessel* (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things and soon broken) that they might *continue many days*, for the use of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchase. Purchasing reversions may be a kindness to those that come after us, and a good man thus *lays up his inheritance for his children's children.*

2. What was the design of having this bargain made? It was to signify, that though Jerusalem was now besieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waste, yet the time should come, when *houses, and fields, and vineyards should be again possessed in this land*, *ver. 15.* As God appointed Jeremiah to confirm his predictions of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem, by his own practice in purchasing this field. Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation, that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the deeper upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both in these instances. God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, in behalf of his heirs, put in for a share. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it, as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome, and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was presently purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raise the siege, *lib. 2. cap. 6.* And have not we much more reason to venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last? *Non si male nunc & olim sic erit.*

16. ¶ Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, 17. Ah, LORD God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. 18. Thou shewest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, 19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; (to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.) 20. Which hast fet

signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; 21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror; 22. And hast given them this land which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; 23. And they came in and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandest them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: 24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass: and behold, thou seest it. 25. And thou hast said unto me, O LORD God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, which puzzled the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully, yet in reflection upon them was mightily at a loss, within himself how to reconcile them; and in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was not the ill bargain he seemed to have made for himself, in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of; but the ease of his people, for when he was still a kind and faithful intercessor, and he was willing to hope, that if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch; which may intimate to us, that when we are going to worship God, we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and incumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burden to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord, and then be easy.

In this prayer or meditation,

1. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the creator, upholder, and benefactor of the whole creation; thereby owning his irresistible power, that he can do what he will, and his incontestible sovereignty, that he may do what he will, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of providence, it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider as Jeremiah doth here, (1.) That God is the fountain of all being, power, life, motion, and perfection; he *made the heaven and the earth with his outstretched arm*, and therefore who can controul him? who dares contend with him? (2.) That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable. *Nothing is too hard for thee*: when human skill and power are quite nonplussed, with God is strength and wisdom sufficient to master all the opposition. (3.) That he is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy: that is his darling attribute; it is his goodness that is his glory; thou not only art kind, but *shewest loving-kindness*, not to a few, to here and there one, but to thousands, thousands of persons, thousands of generations. (4.) That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reprieves are not pardons, but if in mercy he spares the parents that they may be led to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such a displeasure against sinners, that he *recompenseth their iniquity into the bosom of their children*, and yet doth them no wrong: so hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God. (5.) That he is a God of universal dominion and command. He is the great God, for he is the mighty God, and might among men makes them great. He is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, that is his name, and he answers his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. (6.) That he contrives every thing for the best, and effects every thing as he contrives it. He is *great in counsel*; so vast are the reaches, and so deep are the designs of his wisdom, and he is *mighty in doing*, according to the counsel of his will. Now such a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to, and all his disposals cheerfully acquiesced in.

2. He acknowledgeth the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he passeth upon them, *ver. 19.* *Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men*; wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all their ways, both the course they take, and every step they take, not as an unconcerned spectator, but as an observing judge, to give every one according to his ways, and according to his deserts, which are the fruit of his doings, for men shall find God as they are found of him.

3. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with signs and wonders which remain, if not in the marks of them yet in the memorials of them, even unto this day: for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were minded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men, all the neighbour nations spoke of it, as that which redounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name as at this day. This is repeated again, *ver. 21.* that God brought them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders, witness the ten plagues, with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm that reached Pharaoh, as proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to *Deut. iv. 34.* (2.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey, he swore to their fathers to give it them, and because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, *ver. 22.* and they came in and possessed it. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for his church formerly, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

4. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful carriage of that people towards God.

He

He had done every thing that he promised them to do, they had acknowledged it, 1 Kings viii. 56. but they had *done nothing of all that he commanded them to do*, ver. 23. they made no conscience of any of his laws, they walked not in them, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they obeyed not his voice. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in causing all this evil to come upon them. The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the famine and pestilence within, so that it is ready to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it, ver. 24. it is given into their hands, ver. 25. Now, (1.) He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God hath spoken, is come to pass. God had given them fair warning of it before, which if they had regarded, the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other but that he should do what he has threatened. (2.) He commits the present state of Jerusalem to the divine consideration and compassion, ver. 24. Behold the mounts, or ramparts, or the engines, which they make use of to batter the city and beat down the wall of it. And again, Behold thou seest it, and takest cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou hast chosen to put thy name there? And shall it be thus abandoned? He neither complains of God for what he had done, nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he doth behold it. Whatever trouble we are in upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it, and sees how to remedy it.

5. He seems desirous to be let further into the meaning of this order God had now given him to purchase his kinsman's field, ver. 25. *Though the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans*, and no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet thou hast said unto me, *Buy thee the field*. As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: But when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it, because the thing looked odd and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more an intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must enquire, *What means these statutes and judgments?* Deut. vi. 20.

26. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 27. Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: Is there any thing too hard for me? 28. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: 29. And the Chaldeans shall fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city and burn it with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30. For the children of Israel, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. 31. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face. 32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. 34. But they set their abominations in the house (which is called by my name to defile it). 35. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36. And now therefore thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; 37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. 42. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say; *It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans*. 44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and

take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

We have here God's return to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind and make him easy; and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generation, and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to sing both of mercy and judgment, but God here teacheth him, and to sing unto him of both. When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, yet we may be sure that both are true, both are pure, both shall be made good, and not one iota or tittle of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege: No, saith God, the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins. Note, Assurances of future mercy must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. Be' lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy the field, intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again; he further acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of those spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this word of the Lord, which came here to Jeremiah, first as dreadful threatenings, and then as precious promises, as perhaps any we have in all the Old Testament, life and death, good and evil, are here set before us, let us consider and choose wisely.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced; the decree is gone forth and shall not be recalled.

(1.) God here asserts his own sovereignty and power, ver. 27. *Behold I am Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being; I am that I am; I am the God of all flesh*, i. e. of all mankind, here called *flesh*, because weak and unable to contend with God, Psal. lvi. 4. and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel, is the God of all flesh, and of the spirits of all flesh; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the God of all flesh, he may well ask, *Is any thing too hard for me?* What can he not do from whom all the powers of men are derived, and on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs.

(2.) He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, ver. 23. *I will give this city into his hands*, now he is grasping at it, and he shall take it, and make a prey of it, ver. 29. *The Chaldeans shall come and set fire to it*, shall burn it and all the houses in it, God's house not accepted, nor the king's neither.

(3.) He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that and nothing else that ruins it. (1.) They were impudent and daring in sin: They offered incense to Baal, not in corners, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the tops of their houses, ver. 29. in defiance of God's justice. (2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it to provoke me to anger, ver. 29. They have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, ver. 30. they could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour, out of it, but did it on purpose to offend God. And again, ver. 32. *All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger*. They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy, and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been to me a provocation of my anger and fury, ver. 31. Their carriage in every thing was provoking. (3.) They began betimes, and had continued all along provoking to God. They have done evil before me from their youth, ever since they were first formed into a people, ver. 30. witness their murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness. And as for Jerusalem, though it was the holy city, it has been a provocation to the holy God, from the day that they built it even to this day, ver. 32. O what reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonour that is done him, when even in Judah, where he is known and his name is great, and in Salem where his tabernacle is, there was always that found that was a provocation to him! (4.) All orders and degrees of men contributed to the common guilt, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin. Not only the children of Israel that had revolted from the temple, but the children of Judah too that still adhered to it. Not only the common people, the men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those that should have reprov'd and restrained sin in others were themselves ringleaders in it, their kings and princes, their priests and prophets. (5.) God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their master to whom they were bound in duty, and their benefactor to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest, ver. 33. *I taught them better manners, with as much care as ever any tender parent taught a child, rising up early, in teaching them, studying to adapt the teaching to their capacities, taking them betimes, when they might have been most pliable, but all in vain; they turned not the face to me, would not so much as look upon me, nay, they turned the back upon me, an expression of the highest contempt; as he called them, like forward children, so they went from him*, Hos. xi. 2. *They have not hearkened to receive instruction*, they regarded not a word that was said to them, though it was designed for their own good. (6.) There was in their idolatry an impious contempt of God, for, ver. 34. *They set their abominations, their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degree abominable to God, they set them in the house which is called by my name to defile it*. They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God's temple. (7.) They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty to their own children, for they sacrificed them to Molech, ver. 35. Thus because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into shame, they were justly given up to the vile affections, and stripped of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame.

And lastly, What was the consequence of all this? (1.) They caused Judah to sin, ver. 35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem. (2.) They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God should remove them from before his face, ver. 31. they would throw themselves out of his favour.

1. The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is here promised, ver. 36. &c. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time to favour Zion.

Observe, 1. The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatened at a distance they had no fear, when it attacked them they had no hope: They said concerning the city, ver. 36.

I shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, not by any cowardice or ill conduct of ours, but by the sword, famine, and pestilence: Concerning the country they said, with vexation, ver. 43. It is desolate without man or beast, there is no relief, there is no remedy: It is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a holy fear at all times, have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times. 2. The hope that God gives them of mercy that he had in store for them hereafter. Though their carcases must fall in captivity, yet their children after them should again see this good land and the goodness of God in it.

1. They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come and settle again in this land, ver. 37. They had been under God's anger and fury and great wrath, but now they shall partake of his grace and love and great favour. He had dispersed them, and driven them into all countries: those that fled dispersed themselves: those that fell into the enemies hands were dispersed by them in policy, to prevent combinations among them: God's hand was in both: But now God will find them out, and gather them out of all the countries whither they were driven, as he promised in the law, Deut. xxx. 3, 4. and the saints had prayed, Psal. cvi. 47. Neh. i. 9. He had banished them, but he will bring them again to this place, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past while they were in their own land, but were continually exposed and terrified with the alarms of war; but now *I will cause them to dwell safely.* Being reformed and returned to God, neither their own consciences within, nor their enemies without, shall be a terror to them. He promiseth, ver. 41. *I will plant them in this land assuredly; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and then shall take root here, shall be planted in stability, and not again be unfixed and shaken.*

2. God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an *everlasting covenant*, ver. 40. not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be everlasting: For doubtless here the promises look farther than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every *Israelite indeed.* Good Christians may apply them to themselves, and plead them with God, may claim the benefit, and take the comfort of them.

1. God will own them for his, and make over himself to them to be theirs, ver. 38. *They shall be my people.* He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect and guide, and govern them as his people: And to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy. *I will be their God.* They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

2. God will give them a heart to fear him, ver. 39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people is, that they fear him, that they reverence his majesty, dread his wrath; stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promiseth to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people. Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion men's hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion theirs aright: And a heart to fear God is indeed a good heart, and well fashioned. It is repeated again, ver. 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts,* i. e. work in them gracious principles and dispositions that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts; that can work in us both to will and to do.

3. He will give them one heart, and one way. In order to their walking in one way, he will give them one heart: as the heart is, so will the way be, and both shall be one: that is, (1.) They shall be each of them one with themselves; one heart is the same with a new heart, Ezek. xi. 19. The heart is then one when it is fully determined for God, and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single and God's glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him, then the heart is one and the way one; and unless the heart is thus steady the goings will not be steadfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray with David, Psal. lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name;* for God saith, *I will give them one heart, that they may fear me.* (2.) They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body, Jews and Gentiles shall become one *sheepfold*; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another; the gospel they profess having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image: though they may have many paths, they have but one way, that of serious godliness.

4. He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They had been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore now they are restored to their happiness they shall be confirmed in it, by the preventing of their departures from God, and this will complete their bliss. (1.) God will never leave nor forsake them, *I will not turn away from them to do them good.* Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's mercy endureth for ever; whom he loves he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from his people, *Isa. liv. 8.* but even then he doth not turn from doing and designing them good. (2.) They shall never leave nor forsake him: That is the thing we are in danger of: we have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them a heart to fear him for ever; all days, to be in his fear every day and all the day long, Prov. xxiii. 17. and to continue so to the end of their days. He will put such a principle into their hearts, as that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God ruling in the heart will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

5. He will entail a blessing upon their seed; will give them grace to fear him, for the good of them, and of their children after them. As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better consult the good of posterity, than by setting up and keeping up the fear and worship of God in our families.

6. He will take a pleasure in their prosperity, and will do every thing to advance it, ver. 41. *I will rejoice over them to do them good.* God will therefore do them good, because he rejoiceth over them; they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but will delight in doing them good. When he punisheth them it is with reluctance, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* But when he restores them it is with

Vol. II. No. CXXVII.

satisfaction, he rejoiceth in doing them good; We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful giver, and therefore loves a cheerful servant. *I will plant them* (saith God) *with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.* He will be interst upon it, and take delight in it; he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensations of providence shall concur to it. All things shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said the Governor of the world was entirely taken up with care of his church.

7. These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were, and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these notwithstanding their present despair, ver. 42. *As I have brought all this great evil upon them, pursuant to the threatenings and for the glory of divine justice, so will I bring upon them all this good, pursuant to the promise and for the glory of divine mercy.* He that is faithful to his threatenings, will much more be so to his promises: And he will comfort his people according to the time that he has afflicted them. The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity.

8. As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and though now they are a drug, there shall again be purchasers enow for them, ver. 43, 44. *Fields shall be bought in this land, and people will covet to have lands here rather than any where else: Lands, wherever they lie, will go off, not only in the places about Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah and of Israel too, whether they lie on mountains, or in valleys, or in the south, in all parts of the country, men shall buy fields, and subscribe evidences.* Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with; husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall covet to lay it out upon lands; laws shall again have their due course, for they shall subscribe evidences and seal them; This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase, though he had bought a piece of ground and could not go see it, yet he must believe that was the pledge of many a purchase, and those but faint resemblances of the purchased possessions in the heavenly Canaan; reserved for all those who have God's fear in their hearts, and do not depart from him.

C H A P. XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolations of their country, and dispersions of their people: And these promises have both in type and tendency a reference as far forward as to the gospel church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, 1. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established in statu quo, ver. 1—6. 2. That the captives having their sins pardoned shall be restored, ver. 7, 8. 3. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God, ver. 9. 4. That the country shall have both joy and plenty, ver. 10—14. 5. That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah, ver. 15, 16. 6. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel shall flourish again and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ; a gospel ministry and the gospel church shall continue while the world stands, ver. 17—26.

1. **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, (while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison) saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is his name; 3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not 4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword; 5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city. 6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me, 9. ¶ And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them; and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Observe here, 1. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with: It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was the second time; God speaketh once, yea, twice, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient that we have need of precept upon precept to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, came to Jeremiah when he was in prison. Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits: Nay, oftentimes as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then, when the world frowns upon them: Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bear date out of a prison.

2. The prophecy itself: A great deal of comfort is wrapped up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe, (1.) Who it is that secures this comfort to them, ver. 2. It is The Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that framed it. He is the maker and former of

heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, chap. xxxii. 17. He is the maker and former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them, built them for his own praise, and therefore will. *He formed it to establish it*, and therefore it shall be established till those things be introduced which cannot be shaken but shall remain for ever. He is the maker and former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, that has made the promise, will make it good; for *Jehovah is his name*; A God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, which when he doth is known by that name, *Exod. vi. 3.* A perfecting God; when the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the Creator is called Jehovah, *Gen. ii. 1.*

(2.) How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in: by prayer, *ver. 3. Call upon me, and I will answer thee.* The prophet having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for farther discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, chap. xxxii. 16. but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God, must continue instant in prayer; we must call upon him, and then he will answer us: Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him, *Psal. ii. 8. I will shew thee great and mighty things, i. e. give thee a clear and full prospect of them; hidden things, which though in part discovered already, yet thou knowest not, thou canst not understand or give credit to.* Or this may refer not only to the prediction of these things which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede but to quicken and encourage prayer. See *Ezek. xxxvi. 37.*

(3.) How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which, its restoration should be brought about in due time, *ver. 4, 5. The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts, or engines of battery, and by the sword or axes, or hammers.* It is the same word that is used, *Ezek. xvi. 9. With his axes shall he break down thy towers.* The strongest, statelyest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem: They that came to fight with the Chaldeans, to beat them off from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled with the dead bodies of men, that died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God saith, they were such as he had slain in his anger, for the enemy's sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself from this city; so that he was just in all that he brought upon them.

(4.) What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

1. Is their state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, *Jer. viii. 22.* The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; but, *ver. 6. I will bring it health and cure, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again, chap. xxx. 17.* Note, Be the case never so desperate, if God undertake the cure he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it, *Isa. i. 6.* its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought, *I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth, i. e. I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time.* Peace stands here for all good; peace and truth is peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that: Or, peace and truth is peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, 1. That peace and truth are the great subject matter of divine revelation: These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us peace and truth, the method of true peace; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. Grace and truth, and abundance of both, came by Jesus Christ. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ came that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly. Christ rules by the power of truth, *John xviii. 37.* and by it he gives abundance of peace, *Psal. lxxii. 7.* and *lxxxv. 10.* 2. That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: It heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, *John xvii. 17. He sent his word and healed them;* And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

2. Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? *I will cause their captivity to return, ver. 7.* both that of Israel and that of Judah, for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterwards many of all the other tribes return: and I will rebuild them, as *I built them at first.* When they by repentance do their first work, God will by their restoration do his first works.

3. Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed; *ver. 8.* 1. By sin they are become filthy and odious to God's holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity; as those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the water of purification, had liberty of access to it again, so had they their own land, and the privileges of it, when God had cleansed them from their iniquities. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, *Purge me with hyssop.* 2. By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will pardon all their iniquities, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All that by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

4. Here both their sins and their sufferings are turned to the dishonour of God? their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, *ver. 9.* Jerusalem thus rebuilt, Judah thus repopled, shall be to me a name of joy, as pleasing to God as ever they had been provoking, and a praise and an honour before all the nations. They being thus restored shall glorify God by their services of him, and he shall glorify himself by his favours to them. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion, as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations shall hear of all the good that God has wrought in them by his grace, and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world, as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. And they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness. 1. The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour, *Hos. iii. 5. They shall fear the Lord, and his*

goodness. 2. The neighbour nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies when the church is fair as the moon and clear as the sun, she is terrible as an army with banners.

10. Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast, 11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD. 12. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. 13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the LORD. 14. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. 15. ¶ In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Here is a farther prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

1. It is promised that the people that were long in sorrow shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now that the country would lie for ever desolate, that no beasts should be found in the land of Judah, no inhabitants in the streets of Jerusalem; and consequently there would be nothing but an universal and perpetual melancholy, *ver. 10.* but though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened, *chap. vii. 34.* and *xvi. 9.* that the voice of joy and gladness should cease there, but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that the voice of joy and gladness shall be heard there, because the captivity shall be returned, for then was their mouth filled with laughter, *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2.* There shall be common joy there. The voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; marriages shall again be celebrated as formerly with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside, for their harps were hung on the willow-trees. 2. There shall be religious joy there; temple songs shall be revived, the Lord's songs, which they could not sing in a strange land. There shall be heard, in their private houses and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, the voice of them that shall joy, praise the Lord of hosts. Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people, than to have God praised and honoured among them: This shall complete the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as the Lord of hosts, and as the God who is good and whose mercy endures for ever. This, though a song of old, yet being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, *Ezra iii. 11.* They sung together in praising the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever. The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon: they shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord. All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God, but this seems to be meant for the spiritual sacrifices of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, the calves of our lips, *Hos. xiv. 2.* which shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock. The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but the sacrifice of praise, and to those days promise has a farther reference.

2. It is promised, that the country which had laid long depopulated should be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, without man, and without beast; but after their return the pastures shall again be clothed with flocks, *Psal. lxxv. 13.* In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin, there shall be a habitation of shepherds, *ver. 12, 13.* This speaks, 1. The wealth of the country after their return. It shall not be an habitation of beggars, that have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good flocks upon the ground they are returned to. 2. The peace of the country. It shall not be an habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but they shall be shepherds' tents: for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See *Psal. cxliv. 13, 15.* 3. The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning glorified in this, that they were shepherds, *Gen. xlvii. 3.* and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, causing their flocks to lie down, *ver. 12.* and to pass under the hands of him that telleth them, *ver. 13.* for though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have never so much of the world to keep an account of what they have. Some think they pass under the hand of him that telleth them that they may be tithed, *Lev. xxvii. 32.* Then we may take the comfort of what we have when God has had his dues out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises, *ver. 14. I will perform that good thing which I have promised.* Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards

towards an accomplishment, it works surely. *The days will come*, though they are long in coming.

3. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, *ver. 15, 16.* and probably this is *that good thing*, that great good thing, which in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and which their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, was in order to. *From the captivity to Christ* is one of the famous periods, *Matt. i. 17.* This promise of the Messiah we had before, *chap. xxiii. 5, 6.* and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds which God would set over them, which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduceth it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of, 1. As a rightful king; he is a *Branch of righteousness*, not a usurper, for he *grows up unto David*, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. 2. As a righteous King, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment; righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing those that do wrong; *he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.* This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done, *chap. xxii. 17.* but it has a farther reference to him whom all judgment, is committed, and who shall judge the world in righteousness. 3. As a King that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him *Judah shall be saved* from wrath and the curse, and being so saved, *Jerusalem shall dwell safely*, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this prince of peace, this prince of his peace. 4. As a King that shall be praised by his subjects; *This is the name whereby they shall call him*, so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin; this name of his they shall celebrate and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him. It may be read more agreeable to the original, *This is he who shall call her, the Lord our righteousness*, as Moses's altar is called *Jehovah-nissi*, *Exod. xvii. 15.* and *Jerusalem*, *Jehovah-shammah*, *Ezek. xlv. 35.* intimating, that they glory in Jehovah as present with them, and their banner; so here the city is called, *The Lord our righteousness*, because they glory in Jehovah as their righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ (saith Mr. Gataker) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is *made of God to us righteousness*, and she by bearing that name professeth to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, *Isa. xlv. 24.* and *we are made the righteousness of God in him.* The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths, that they shall themselves be called by it.

17. ¶ For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; 18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. 19. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, 20. Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; 21. Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. 22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. 23. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off: thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. 25. Thus saith the LORD: If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; 26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted, but it is here promised, that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings; typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

1. The covenant of royalty shall be secured; and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ, the son of David, *ver. 17.* The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel, Jeconiah was written childless. After their return the house of David made a figure again: but it is in the Messiah that this promise is performed, that *David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel*: And that *David shall have always a son to reign upon his throne*: For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening head, and glorified head over all things, as long as he is *King upon the holy hill of Zion*, David doth not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the first-begotten was brought into the world, it was declared concerning him, that *the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, *Luke i. 33.*

For the confirmation of this it is promised, 1. That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven; to the stability of which, that of God's promise is compared, *chap. xxxi. 35, 36.* There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled, and on which it is founded, here called a *covenant of the day and night*, *ver.*

20, 25. because that is one of the articles of it, that there shall be *day and night in their season*, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and established their mutual succession, and a government to each, that *the sun should rule by day, and the moon and stars by night*, *Gen. i. 4, 5—16.* which establishment was renewed after the flood, *Gen. viii. 22.* and has continued ever since, *Psal. xix. 2.* the morning and the evening have both of them their regular outgoings, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* the day spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps both, so do the shadows of the evening; and while the world stands this course shall not be altered, this covenant shall not be broken; the ordinances of heaven and earth (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth) which God has appointed, *ver. 25.* (compare *Job xxxviii. 33*) shall never be disappointed: Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer, God's servant, but David our king, *ver. 21.* This intimates, that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end; he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and days shall be no more: *Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*, and when the end cometh, and not till then, it shall be delivered up to God, even the Father: But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed and counterchanged, prosperity and adversity succeeding each other, as light and darkness, day and night: But this is plainly taught us, that as sure as we may be, that though the sun will set to-night, it will rise again tomorrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be, that though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, yet it will shine forth again and recover its lustre in the time appointed. 2. That the seed of David shall be as numerous as the host of heaven, i. e. the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel, and his Spirit working with it: *from the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth*, to be his willing people, *Psal. cx. 3.* Christ's seed are not as David's were, his successors but his subjects, yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him, *ver. 22.* As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extirpated for want of heirs. The children are numerous, and if children, then heirs.

2. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of that also shall have their full accomplishment: This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple-service for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive: It did so; immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem, there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually, *Ezra iii. 2, 3.* as is here promised, *ver. 18.* But that priesthood soon grew corrupt, the covenant of Levi was profaned, as appears *Mal. ii. 8.* and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period; we must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant with the day and the night. And we find it abundantly performed, 1. In the priesthood of Christ, which supercedes that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great high-priest of our profession is always appearing in the presence of God for us, presenting the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the mercy of his intercession, it may truly be said, that the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually, *Heb. viii. 3.* He is a priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called a *covenant of peace*, *Numb. xxv. 12.* of life and peace, *Mal. ii. 5.* Now we are sure this covenant is not broken, or in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our life and our peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a priest upon his throne, as Melchizedec. 2. In a settled gospel ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, the priests the Levites, do not want successors; and such as have obtained a more excellent ministry. The apostle makes those that preach the gospel to come in the room of those that served at the altar, *1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.* 3. In all true believers, who are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, *1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.* who are made to our God kings and priests, *Rev. i. 6.* they offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God; and themselves, in the first place, living sacrifices. Of these Levites, this promise here must be understood, *ver. 12.* that they shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general, *Gen. xxii. 17.* for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, *Rev. v. 9, 10.* and *vii. 9, 15.*

3. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured, and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel Israel. Observe, 1. How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, *ver. 24.* God asks the prophet; Hast thou not heard, and dost thou not consider, what this people have spoken? either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extirpation of the people that had made such a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, this people, among whom thou dwellest, they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them: The two families which the Lord hath chosen, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, he hath even cast them off: Thus have they despised my people, i. e. despised the privilege of being my people, as if it were a privilege of no value at all: The neighbour nations despised them as now no more a nation, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust; But, 2. See now how the covenant stands notwithstanding, as firm as that with day and night; sooner will God suffer day and night to cease, than he will cast away the seed of Jacob. This cannot refer to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away, but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, *Rom. xi. 1, &c.* Christ is that seed of David that is to be perpetual dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and as this people shall never want such a King, so this King shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in the dominion of Christ and the subjection of Christians to him, till day and night come to an end: And, as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, *I will cause their captivity to return*; and, having brought them back, *I will have mercy on them.* Whom this promise refers to, appears *Gal. vi. 16.* where all that walked according to the gospel rule, are made to be the Israel of God, on whom peace and mercy shall be.

C H A P. XXXIV.

In this chapter we have two messages which God sent by Jeremiah, 1. One to foretell the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he should fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he should live a captive, but should at last die in peace in his captivity, *ver. 1—7.* 2. Another to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealings with God, in bringing back their servants into bondage, whom they had released according to the law, and so playing fast and loose with

with God; They had walked at all adventures with God, ver. 8—11. and therefore God would walk at all adventures with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again, then when they began to hope they were got clear of them, ver. 12—22.

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, (when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof) saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: 3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. 4. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword: 5. But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee: and they will lament thee saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD. 6. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem. 7. When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah, that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah.

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered by Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned before he was shut up in the prison, for we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, chap. xxii. 4.

Observe, (1.) The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah: it was when the king of Babylon, with all his forces, came out of all the kingdoms of the earth that were within his jurisdiction, fought against Jerusalem and the cities thereof, ver. 1. designing to destroy them, have often plundered them: The cities that now remained, and yet held out, are named, ver. 7. Lachish and Azekah. This intimates, that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

(2.) The message itself that was sent him.

1. Here is a threatening of wrath: He is told that again, which he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, and burnt with fire, ver. 2. that he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon, ver. 3. yet Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon, nor did he, for his eyes were put out, Ezek. xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God by his other sins, and from Nebuchadnezzar by his breaking of his faith with him.

2. Here is a mixture of mercy: He shall die a captive, but he shall not die by the sword, he shall die a natural death, ver. 4. he shall end his days with some comfort, shall die in peace, ver. 5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had done in the fight of the Lord, he repented of it in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him, and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be said to die in peace. Note, A man may die in prison, and yet die in peace. Nay, he shall end his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried with the burnings of his father, i. e. with the respect usually shewn to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems to his captivity he had carried himself so well towards his own people, that they were willing to do him that honour, and towards Nebuchadnezzar, that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse, and would have departed at last without being desired; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him, that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better to live and die penitent in a prison, than live and die impenitent in a palace. They will lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord, an honour which his brother Jehoiakim had not, chap. xxii. 18. The Jews say, they lamented thus over him, Alas! Zedekiah is dead, who drunk the dregs of all the ages that went before him, i. e. who suffered for the sins of his ancestors, the measure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They shall thus lament him, with the Lord, for I have pronounced the word, and what God hath spoken shall without fail be made good.

3. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message; though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself for he was clapped up for it, yet he spake all these words to Zedekiah, ver. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their courses, that they may reform and live.

8. ¶ This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; 9. That every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. 10. Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. 11. But afterwards they turned, and caused

the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. 12. ¶ Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 13. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, 14. At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16. But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. 17. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, 19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; 20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. 22. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy.

1. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants.

(1.) The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but after they had served one apprenticeship, they should be discharged, and have their liberty; yea, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were sold by the judges for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but their brethren must serve but for seven years at the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, ver. 13; 14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them, Exod. xxi. 2. and there was good reason for that law. 1. God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of it themselves, and to put a difference between it and other nations. 1. God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour, by letting those go to whom their houses were houses of bondage, as Egypt had been to their forefathers: That deliverance is therefore mentioned here, ver. 13. as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassion towards us should engage our compassion, towards our brethren; we must release as we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a covenant; for our performance of the duty required, is the condition of the continuance of the favours God hath bestowed.

(2.) This law they and their fathers had broken; their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant: When their servants had lived seven years with them, they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it, better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part from them, though God himself by his law had made them free. Your fathers hearkened not to me in this matter, ver. 14. so that from the days of their fathers they had been in this trespass; and they thought they might do it, because their fathers did it, and their servants had by disuse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, or prescription to be admitted in plea. For this sin of their's and their father's God now brought them into servitude, and justly.

(3.) When they were besieged, and closely shut in by the army of the Chaldeans, they being told of their fault in this matter, presently reformed, and let go all their servants that were intitled to their freedom by the law of God: as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to let the people go, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so. (1.) The prophets faithfully admonished them concerning their sin. From them they heard that they should let their Hebrew servants go free, ver. 10. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word: people must hear the word preached

preached, because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word written. (2.) All orders and degrees of men concurred in this reformation. The king, and the princes, and all the people agreed to let go their servants, whatever loss or damage they might sustain by so doing. When the king and princes led in this good work, the people could not for shame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far towards extirpating of the most inveterate corruptions. (3.) They bound themselves by a solemn oath and covenant that they would do this, whereby they engaged themselves to God and one another. Note, What God hath bound us to by his precept, it is good for us to bind ourselves to by our promise. This covenant was very solemn: it was made in a sacred place, made before me, in the house which is called by my name, ver. 15. in the special presence of God, the tokens of which, in the temple, ought to strike an awe upon them, and make them very sincere in their appeals to him. It was ratified by a significant sign, they cut a calf in two, and passed between the parts thereof, ver. 18, 19, with this dreadful imprecation, Let us be in like manner cut in sunder, if we do not perform what we now promise: And this calf was probably offered up in sacrifice to God, who was thereby made a party to the covenant. When God covenanted with Abram, for the ratification of it, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, in allusion to this federal rite, Gen. xv. 17. Note, That we may effectually oblige ourselves to our duty, it is good to frighten ourselves with the apprehensions of the terror of that wrath and curse to which we expose ourselves, if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will cut sinners asunder, Matt. xxiv. 51. and sensible signs may be of use to make the impressions of it deep and durable, as here. (4.) They conformed themselves herein to the command of God, and their covenant with God, and their covenant with him; they did let their servants go, though at this time, when the city was besieged, they could very ill spare them. Thus they did right in God's sight, ver. 15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleased with it, and if they had persevered in this act of mercy to the poor, to their poor servants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27.

2. When there was some hopes that the siege was raised, and the danger over, they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the servants they had released into their respective service again. (1.) The king of Babylon's army was now gone up from them, ver. 21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppose the progress of the king of Babylon's victories, upon the tidings of which the Chaldeans raised the siege for a time, as we find chap. xxxvii. 5. They departed from Jerusalem. See how ready God was to put a stop to his judgments upon the first instance of reformation, so slow is he to anger, and so swift to shew mercy. As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. (2.) When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, ver. 11, and again, ver. 16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome, after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves, that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it: But it was especially an affront to God; in doing this they polluted his name, ver. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it or break it as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of the wrath which they had imprecated to themselves, in case they should break that covenant. It was jesting with God almighty, as if he could be imposed upon by fallacious promises, which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themselves no longer obliged by. It was lying to God with their mouths, and flattering him with their tongues. It was likewise a contempt of the judgments of God, and setting them at defiance; as if when once the course of them was stopped a little and interrupted, they would never proceed again, and the judgment would never be revived: Whereas reprieves are so far from being pardons, that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of divine vengeance.

3. For this treacherous dealing with God they are here severely threatened. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissimulated repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary reformation, will prove in the end to have put the great cheat upon their own souls: For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. It is here threatened with an observable air of displeasure against them, (1.) That since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without controul, ver. 17. You have not proclaimed liberty to your servants. Though they had done it, ver. 10, yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but undid it again; and *factum non decitur quod non perseverat*. The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from shall be forgotten and not mentioned, no more than if it had never been, Ezek. xviii. 24. therefore, I will proclaim a liberty for you, i. e. I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which those forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance: you shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence: such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a great strait, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Note, Those that will not be in subjection to the law of God, put themselves into subjection to the wrath and curse of God. But this shews what liberty to sin really is, it is but a liberty to the forest judgment. (2.) That since they had brought their servants back into confinement in their houses, God would make them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they shall live in servitude, and being strangers could not expect the privileges of freeborn subjects. (3.) That since they had broken the covenant which they had ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves, in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered, because they have not performed the condition! for so some read, ver. 18. I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant as the calf which they cut in twain; I will divide them in sunder as they divided it in sunder. (4.) That since they would not let go their servants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of those that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jerusalem, of the country and of the city; the eunuchs, chamberlains or great officers of the court, the priests, and all the people; they had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin without exception, ver. 19. they shall all be given into the hands of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life: And they shall have what they seek; but neither shall that content them, when they have their lives, they shall leave their dead bodies unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind, and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being here fastened on them. (5.) That since they had emboldened themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would therefore bring it upon them again. They are now gone up from you, and your

fright is over for the present, but I will command them to face about as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it, and burn it. Note, 1. As confidence in God is a hopeful preface of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sad omen of approaching destruction. 2. When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unhumiliated and unreformed, (it is *cum animo revertendi*) they do but retreat to come on again with so much the greater force: for when God judgeth, he will overcome. 3. It is just with God to disappoint those expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for, when, we disappoint those expectations of duty, which our professions, pretensions and fair promises had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had proposed, God will repent of the good he had proposed. With the forward, thou wilt shew thyself forward.

C H A P. XXXV.

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet's sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof, if they persisted in it. The scope of this sermon in this chapter is to shame them out of their disobedience, if they had any sense of honour left in them, for a discourse of this nature to fasten upon: (1.) He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in that obedience, and would not be tempted from it, ver. 1—11. (2.) With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempts of his precepts, ver. 12—15. (3.) He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious disobedience to God, ver. 16, 17. (4.) He assures the Rechabites of the blessings of God upon them, for their pious obedience to their father, ver. 18, 19.

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah; and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; 4. And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaiah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: 5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever. 7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. 8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of no earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it was said and done in the days of Jehoiakim; ver. 1 but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army came up into the land, ver. 11. which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned, 2 Kings xxiv. 2. which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After the judgments of God had broke in upon this rebellious people, he continued to deal with them by his prophets to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from them. He endeavours it by the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves, and were no more numbered with the families of Israel, than they with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears, 1 Chron. ii. 55. These are the Kenites that came out of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab. The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab Moses' father-in-law, Judges i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 2 Sam. xv. 9. See Judges iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourished in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, near 300 years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, 2 Kings x. 15, 16. which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion, than to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now here we are told;

1. What the rules of living were, which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament in writing duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think they were such as he himself had all his days observed. (1.) He forbade them to drink wine, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to make glad the heart of man; and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it and get hurt by it, and a good man that has his heart made continually glad with the light of God's countenance, hath so little need of it for that purpose, (Psalms iv. 6, 7.) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial,

either not to use it at all, or very sparingly and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1 Tim. v. 23. (2.) He appointed them to dwell in tents, and not to build houses or purchase lands, or rent or occupy either, ver. 7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification, beyond what the Nazarites were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy, and not to indulge the body; they were moveable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root any where in this world. They must dwell in tents *all their days*, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of tabernacles, not only in summer-days, as soldiers and shepherds, but *all their days*. They must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no not under the decays of old age.

Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to shew his authority, and to exercise a dominion over them, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to shew his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet not trying them by an oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for edification, yet to be dispensed with in any case of necessity, as here, ver. 11. He prescribed these rules to them. (1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, Exod. ii. 16. and he would have his posterity keep to it, and not degenerate from it as Israel had done, who originally were shepherds and dwelt in tents, Gen. xvi. 34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were mean. (2.) That they might comport with their lot, and bring their mind to their condition, Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized, Numb. x. 32. but it seems they were not, they were still *strangers in the land*, ver. 7. had no inheritance in it, and therefore must live by their employments, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging; for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers, why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? *Mind not high things*. (3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 14. and would seek occasions to quarrel with them, and do them a mischief; therefore he thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might *live many days in the land where they were strangers*. Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity is oftentimes the best policy, and men's surest protection. (4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them, and therefore obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and that they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and temperate, and abstemious, which would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort *in the land where they were strangers*. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous and gracious contempt. (5.) That they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity. Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly degenerated, and he would have his family provide, that if they could not in the *peace thereof*, yet even in the midst of the troubles thereof, *they might have peace*. Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be the less dreadful to them: let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might the easier be stripped of it. Note, Those are in the best frame to meet sufferings, that are mortified to the world, and live a life of self-denial. (6.) That in general they might learn to live by rule, and under discipline. It is good for us all to do so, and teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as it is likely Jonadab had done, when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world, and the dangerous snares that are in the abundance of its wealth and pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded, when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

2. We are here told how strictly his posterity observed these rules, ver. 8, 9, 10. They had in their respective generations all of them *obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father, had done according to all that he commanded them*. They drank no wine, though they dwelt in a country where there was plenty of it; their wives and children drank no wine, for they that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products of their cattle. This they did partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a veneration they had for his name and authority, and partly from the experience they themselves had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names have upon men, and how that which seems very difficult will by long usage and custom become easy, and in a manner natural.

Now, (1.) As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it, ver. 11. *When the king of Babylon came into the land with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there*. Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too strict, but so as to admit of a dispensation when the necessity of the case calls for it; which therefore in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expressly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterwards be forced to say, *It was an error*, Ecclef. v. 6. and commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites had tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family. (2.) As to the other particulars, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greatest urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple, ver. 2. into a prophet's chamber there, rather than into the chamber of the princes that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself, when it was delivered in the chambers of a man of God. There he not only asked the Rechabites, *Would they drink any wine, but he set pots full of wine before them, and cups to drink out of, made the temptation*

as strong as possible, and said, *Drink ye wine, ye shall have it on free cost; you have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jerusalem, why may not you break this too; and when you are in the city, do as they there do*. But they peremptorily refused, they all agreed in the refusal; *No, we will drink no wine; for with us it is against the law*. The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and when they did, urged it no further, for he saw they were steadfastly resolved. Note, Those temptations are of no force with men of confirmed sobriety, which yet daily overcome such as, notwithstanding their convictions, are of no resolution in the paths of virtue.

12. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 13. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. 14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed, for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early, and speaking: but ye hearkened not unto me. 15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18. ¶ And Jeremiah sent unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites constancy was intended but for a sign, now here we have the application of it.

1. The Rechabites observance of their father's charge to them, is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God: Let them see it and be ashamed. The prophet asks them in God's name, *Will ye not at length receive instruction?* ver. 13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandments, ver. 14. but you have not inclined your ear to me, ver. 15. though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him, than that the sons of Jonadab should have obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for, (1.) The Rechabites were obedient to one that was but a man like themselves, that had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but the Jews were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, that had an absolute authority over them as the father of their spirits. (2.) Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders, nor give correction for it; but God lives for ever, to see how his laws are observed, and is in a readiness to revenge all disobedience. (3.) The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often sent his prophets to his people to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it: This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience, *I have myself spoken to you, rising early, and speaking*, by the written word, and the dictates and admonition of conscience, ver. 14. Nay, *I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, men like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up early, and sending them*, ver. 15. and yet all in vain. (4.) Jonadab never did that for his seed that God had done for his people; he left them a charge, but left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a good land, and promised them, if they would be obedient, they should still dwell in it: So that they were bound both in gratitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they would not hear, they would not hearken. (5.) God did not tie up his people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed, and God's were not.

2. Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them, and shall condemn them; for they very punctually performed the commandment of their father, and continued and persevered in their obedience to it, ver. 16. but this people, this rebellious and gain saying people, has not hearkened unto me; and therefore, ver. 17. because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatenings of it; *I will bring upon them*, by the Chaldean army, *all the evil pronounced against them*, both in the law and in the prophets, for *I have spoken to them, I have called to them*; spoken in a still small voice to them that were near, and called aloud to them that were at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them; spoke by his word, called by his providence, both to the same purpose, and yet all to no purpose; they have not heard nor answered.

3. Mercy is here promised to the family of the Rechabites, for their steady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their house: though it was only for the shaming of Israel that their constancy was tried: yet being unshaken, it was found unto praise, and honour and glory: And God takes occasion from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve for them, ver. 18, 19. and they should have the comfort of them. It is promised, (1.) That

the family shall continue as long as any of the families of Israel, among whom they were strangers and sojourners. It shall *never want a man to inherit what they had*, though they had no inheritance to leave them. Note, Sometimes those that have the smallest estates have the most numerous progeny: but he that sends mouths will be sure to send meat. (2.) That religion shall continue in the family; *He shall not want a man to stand before me, to serve me.* Though they are neither priests nor Levites, nor appear to have had any post in the temple service, yet in a constant course of regular devotion, they *stand before God* to minister to him. Note, 1. The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon a family, is to have the worship of God kept up in it from generation to generation. 2. Temperance and self-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help to transmit the observance of them to posterity. The more dead we are to the delights of sense, the better we are disposed for the service of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this heedless and untoward people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is provided, containing an abstract or abridgment of all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard, and might the better understand it, when they had it all before them at one view. Now here we have, (1.) The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it, ver. 1—4. (2.) The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publicly on a fast-day, ver. 5—10. afterwards by Baruch to the princes privately, ver. 11—19. and lastly by Jehudite the king, ver. 20, 21. (3.) The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to prosecute Jeremiah and Baruch, ver. 12—26. (4.) The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehoiakim's doom for burning the former, ver. 27—32.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. 3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. 5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: 6. Therefore go thou and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities, 7. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. 8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy, we meet with a roll written in vision, for discovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himself, who was to receive and digest them, *Ezek. ii. 10.* and *iii. 1.* Here, in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with a roll, written in fact, for discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here,

1. The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the writings he had given in God's name to his people, ever since he first began to be a preacher, in the 13th year of Josiah to this day, which was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, *ver. 2, 3.* What had been spoken only must now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the further and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words, which has its advantage one way, must now be contracted, and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once must be recapitulated, and rehearsed to them again, that what was forgotten might be called to mind again, and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing, might take hold of them when they heard it the second time. And what was perhaps already written and published in single sermons, must be collected into one volume, that none might be lost. Note, The writing of the scripture is by divine appointment: And observe, The reason here given for the writing of this roll, *ver. 3. It may be the house of Judah will hear.* Not that the divine providence was at any uncertainty concerning the event, with that there is no peradventure; God knew certainly that they would do very treacherously, *Isa. xlviii. 8.* But the divine wisdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the desired end, which, if it did not, they would be the more inexcusable. And though God foresaw they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet so, but prescribes this method to him as a probable one, to be used, in hopes they will hear: will hear, that is, will heed and regard what they hear, will take notice of it, and mix faith with it: for otherwise our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here, (1.) What it is hoped they will thus hear, *All that evil which I purpose to do unto them.* Note, The serious consideration of the certain fatal consequences of sin, will be of great use to us to bring us to God. (2.) What it is hoped will be produced thereby, *They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way.*

Note, The conversion of sinners from their evil courses, is that which ministers should aim at in preaching, and people hear the word in vain, if that point be not gained with them. To what purpose do we hear of the evil God will bring upon us for our sin, if we continue notwithstanding to do evil against him? (3.) Of what vast advantage their consideration and conversion will be to them; that I may forgive their iniquity. This plainly implies the honour of God's justice, with which it is not consistent that he should forgive the sin, unless the sinner repent of it, and turn from it; but it plainly expresseth the honour of his mercy, that he is very ready to forgive sin, and only waits till the sinner be qualified to receive forgiveness; and therefore useth various means to bring us to repentance, that he may forgive.

2. The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to this command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, *ver. 4.* God bid Jeremiah write, but it should seem he had not the pen of a ready writer, he could not write fast, or not fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuensis. St. Paul wrote but few of his epistles with his own hand, *Gal. vi. 11. Rom. xvi. 22.* God dispenseth his gifts variously; some have a good faculty at speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, We have no need of you, *1 Cor. xii. 21.* The spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field, *chap. xxxii. 12.* and now was advanced to be his scribe and substitute in his prophetic office; and if we may credit the Apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterwards himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high, and it is good for those that are designed for prophets, to have their education under prophets, and be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a roll of a book, on pieces of parchment or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

3. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems, was shut up, and could not go to the house of the Lord himself, *ver. 5.* though he was not a close prisoner, for there there had been no occasion to send officers to seize him, *ver. 26.* yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence, where he might be serving God and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himself, he sent one that was deputed by him, to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person. Nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached, may contribute very much towards the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known, it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary, *Phil. iii. 1.* and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it as here at second hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can, when they cannot do what they would. Observe, When God ordered the reading of the roll, he said, *It may be they will hear and return from their evil ways, ver. 3.* When Jeremiah orders it, he saith, *It may be they will pray, (they will present their supplications before the Lord,) and will return from their evil way.* Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us is necessary, in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God of the necessity of returning to him, will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders Baruch did read out of the book the words of the Lord, whenever there was a holy convocation, *ver. 8.*

9. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. 10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people. 11. ¶ When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, 12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears. 16. Now it came to pass when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. 17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? 18. Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. 19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it all together, which is here spoken of, for the directions were given about it the *fourth year of Jerusalem*, whereas this was done in the *fifth year*, ver. 9. But some think, that the writing of the book fair over took up so much time, that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two, he might begin it in the latter end of the fourth year, and finish it in the beginning of the fifth, for the *ninth month* refers to the computation of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

1. The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed, ver. 9. either upon the account of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain, chap. xiv. 1. *They proclaimed a fast to the people*; whether the king and princes, or the priests ordered this fast, is not certain; but it was plain God by his providence called them aloud to it. Note, Great shews of piety and devotion may be found even among those, who, though they keep up these forms of godliness, are strangers and enemies to the power of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fasting without reforming, and turning away from sin, will never turn away the judgments of God, *Jonah* iii. 10. Notwithstanding this fast, God proceeded in his controversy with this people.

2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord on the fast-day: He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window or balcony read to the people that were in the court, ver. 10. Note, When we are speaking to God, we must be willing to hear from him; and therefore on days of fasting and prayer, it is requisite that the word be read and preached. *Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you*, Judges ix. 7. For our help in suing out mercy and grace, it is proper we should be told of sin and duty.

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the secretary's office, here called *the scribe's chamber*, ver. 12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God, to fast and pray and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion-sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope, that it was not with an ill design, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching; but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah informed the princes of what Baruch had read; for his father Gemariah so far countenanced Baruch, as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes sitting in *the scribe's chamber*, and tells them, they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us, we should be ready to communicate it to others, that did not hear it, for their edification. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*.

4. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them, and read it all over again to them, ver. 14, 15. which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work, and therefore desiring to be excused; nor upbraiding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must become all things to all men, if by any means they may gain some; must comply with them in circumstances, that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, *Gal. ii. 2*.

5. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, ver. 16. Observe, *They heard all the words*, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwise how could they make a competent judgment of it? And when they had heard all, they were afraid, were all afraid, one as well as another; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings: The reproofs were just, and the threatenings terrible, and the predictions now in a fair way to be fulfilled; so that laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people, ver. 12. but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) *looked one upon another*, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to second it, only they agreed to tell the king of these words; and if he think fit to give credit to them they will, otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation: And yet at the same time they knew the king's mind so far, that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves, ver. 19. and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other but that the king, instead of being convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners under convictions to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting of the prosecution of them to other persons as these princes here, or to another more convenient season, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trifling question, *How he wrote all these words?* ver. 17. as if they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing, Jeremiah dictated and he wrote, ver. 18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God, to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

20. ¶ And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elithama the scribe; and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elithama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. 22. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. 23. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife; and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. 24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them. 26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take

Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them. 27. ¶ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah (after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah) saying, 28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. 29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30. Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: but they hearkened not. 32. ¶ Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king: and we find,

1. That upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, ver. 20, 21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it, though it had been no disparagement to the greatest of them, much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, that was sent to fetch it, is bid to read it, who, perhaps, scarce knew how to make sense of it: But those who thus despise the word of God will soon make it appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low but ill thoughts of it.

2. That he had not patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but when he had heard *three or four leaves* read, in a rage cut it with his penknife, and threw it piece by piece into the fire; that he might be sure to see it all consumed, ver. 22, 23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. 1. Thus he shewed his impatience of reproof, being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. 2. Thus he shewed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burnt them, if he had had them in his reach, when he was in the passion. 3. Thus he expressed an obstinate resolution never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatsoever God by his prophets saith to the contrary. 4. Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. 5. Thus he thought he had effectually provided, that the things contained in this roll should spread no further, which was the care of the chief priests concerning the gospel, *Acts* iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes, but (saith he) I will take a course it shall never be read more. See what an enmity against God there is in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him!

3. That neither the king himself, nor any of his princes were at all affected with the word, they were not afraid, ver. 20. no, not those princes that trembled at the word, when they heard it the first time, ver. 16. So soon; so easily, do good impressions wear off! They shewed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They rent not their garments, as Josiah did; this Jehoiakim's own father did, when he had the book of the law read to him though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

4. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, ver. 25. If they had from the first shewed themselves, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps, they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have persuaded him to hear it patiently; but many times they that will not do the good they should, put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

5. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect burnt God's warrant by which he was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers, ver. 26. But the Lord hid them. The princes bid them abscond, ver. 19. but it was neither the princes' care for them, nor their's for themselves, that secured them, it was under the divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be ever so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour is come, nay, and then he will himself be their hiding-place.

6. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write the same words in another roll, that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, ver. 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God are very daring, yet not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of none effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extirpate it, nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again: and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt arose another Phoenix. *The word of the Lord endures for ever*.

7. That the king of Judah, though he be a king, shall be severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word, God took notice what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at: He was angry, because it was written therein, saying, *Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land*, ver. 29. And did not the king of Babylon come two years before this, and go far towards the destroying of this land? He did so, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7*. in his third year, *Dan.*

Dan. i. 1. So that God and his prophets were therefore become his enemies, because they told him the truth, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so heinously, let him know, 1. That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; he shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchange his royal robes for prison garments, so that he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die in him; his dead body shall lie unburied, or which comes all to one, he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, heat and frost, which will occasion its putrifying and becoming loathsome the sooner. "Not that his body (saith Mr. Gataker) could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of aught that should befall his body; but that the sight of a king's body in such a condition should be a hideous spectacle, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even his seed and his servants shall fare the worse for their relation to him, ver. 21. for they shall be punished, not for his iniquity, but so much the sooner for their own. 2. That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping God's judgments by struggling with them; whoever hardened his heart against God and prospered?

Lastly, That when the roll was written anew, there were added to the former many like words, ver. 32. many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for since they will yet walk contrary to God, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Note, As God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he hath still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes, do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

C H A P. XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it, 1. A general idea of the ill character of that reign, ver. 1, 2. 2. The message which Zedekiah notwithstanding sent to Jeremiah to desire his prayers, ver. 3. 3. The flattering hopes which the people had conceived, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem, ver. 4. 4. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah (who was now at liberty, ver. 4.) that the Chaldean's army should renew the siege and take the city, ver. 6—10. 5. The imprisonment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter, ver. 11—15. The kindness which Zedekiah shewed him when he was a prisoner, ver. 16—21.

1. **A**ND king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. 3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us. 4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. 5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9. Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. 10. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is, 1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, ver. 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jeconiah, and though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him. *Neither he nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord,* though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled and brought to heed what he saith. These here had proof sufficient that it was the Lord that spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, *Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.* So he did, chap. xxi. 1, 2. and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shews he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people and good ministers, that had an interest in heaven. Note, When we are in distress, we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, *Sech. xii. 5—10.* and yet this doth but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth: If he indeed looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and hearken to the words of the Lord, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this he knew

he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for, that yet will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him and for him. Many that despise prayer when they are in prosperity, will be glad of it when they are in adversity: Now give us of your oil. When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent to the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him; and how can they expect the comforts of religion, that will not stoop to the services of it?

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jeremiah was now at liberty, ver. 4. he went in and out among the people, might freely speak to them, and be spoken to by them: Jerusalem also for the present was at liberty, ver. 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt, *Ezek. xvii. 15.* pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his treachery, the king of Egypt, though he came no more in person after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged: upon notice of the approach of which the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged themselves to hope, that Jerusalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies, and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardened in their security by the intermissions of judgments and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God, may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

4. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for him, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah sends them word back that the decree was gone forth, and it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of. *Thus saith the Lord, deceive not yourselves,* ver. 9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers; which this is an aggravation of, that they are so frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themselves; and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah useth no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

(1.) That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back or be forced back into their own land, *Ezek. xvii. 17.* which was said of old, *Isa. xxx. 7.* is here said again, ver. 7. That the Egyptians shall help in vain; they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God, nor countervail his departure from us.

(2.) That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew the siege, and prosecute it with more vigour than ever. *They shall not depart for good and all,* ver. 9. *They shall come again,* ver. 8. they shall fight against the city. Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of these that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes: He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as pleaseth him; and furious armies, like stormy winds, in all their motion are fulfilling his word.

(3.) That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans, they shall take it, and burn it with fire, ver. 8. The sentence past upon it shall be executed, and they shall be the executioners. O but (say they) the Chaldeans are withdrawn, they have quitted the enterprise as impracticable; and though they have, saith the prophet, nay, though you had smitten their army, so that many were slain, and all the rest wounded, yet those wounded men should rise up, and burn this city, ver. 10. This is designed to speak the doom past upon Jerusalem irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and these Chaldeans are the men that must do it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the stroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under or be reduced to. That by whom God has resolved to save or to destroy, saviours they shall be, and destroyers they shall be, yea, though they were all wounded; for as when God has work to do, he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek; so when he has chosen his instruments, they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

11. ¶ And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12. Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people, 13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. 14. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah and brought him to the princes: 15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. 16. ¶ When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? and Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18. Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19. Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my

lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the baker's street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any other of the prophets; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

1. We are here told, that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country, ver. 11, 12. When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem, because of Pharaoh's army, upon the notice of their advancing towards them, Jeremiah determined to go into the country, and, as the margin reads it, to slip away from Jerusalem in the midst of the people, who, in that interval of the siege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there; he endeavoured to steal away in the crowd, for, though he was a man of great eminency, he could well reconcile himself to obscurity; though he was one of a thousand, he was content to be lost in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage. Whether he designed for Anathoth or no doth not appear, his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as, unless they were well minded since, chap. xi. 21. might discourage him from coming among them; or whether he did not intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish, chap. ix. 2. *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place!* Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jerusalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to enter into the chamber, and shut the doors about them, Isa. xvi. 20.

2. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter, and committed to prison, ver. 13, 14, 15. He was in the gate of Benjamin, so far he had gained his point, when a captain of the ward, who probably had the charge of the gate, discovered him and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who the Jews say was Hananiah the false prophet, that contended with Jeremiah, chap. xxviii. 16. and that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence, and that which he charged upon him is, *Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans*; an unlikely story, for the Chaldeans were now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them; or if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah therefore, with good reason, and with both the confidence and mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge, *It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans, I am going upon my own lawful occasions*. Note. It is no new thing for the church's best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies; thus have the blackest characters been put into the fairest, purest minds, and, in such a malicious world as this is, innocency, nay, excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsely accused, we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously. Jeremiah's protestation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he be a priest, and is ready to lay it in *verbo sacerdotis*, yet is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-counsellor, who, without examining him and the proofs against him, upon the base, malicious insinuation of the captain fell into a passion with him, they were wroth, and what justice could be expected from men, who, being in anger, would hear no reason? They bent him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe; either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison; or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, that made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, into the dungeon, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it; in the cells or cabins, there he could labour, among which there are no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging-places; there Jeremiah remained many days, and, for eight months, no body came near him, or enquired after him. See what a world this is! the wicked princes that are in rebellion against God lie at ease, lie in state in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah that is in the service of God lies in pain, in a loathsome dungeon: It is well there is a world to come!

3. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and shewed him some favour? but, probably, not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid fresh siege to the city: when their vain hopes with which they fed themselves, and in confidence of which they had re-enslaved their servants, chap. xxxiv. 11. were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever; O then (saith Zedekiah) send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him: When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious will men be when pangs come upon them!

(1.) The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him secretly in his house, being ashamed to be seen in his company, *Is there any word from the Lord?* ver. 37. Any word of comfort; Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire? Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity, would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity; and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort is in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly, that there is a word from the Lord, but no word of comfort for him or his people: *Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon*. If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood, he would have given him a plausible answer, and though he would not tell him a lie, yet he might have chosen whether he would tell him the worst at this time; what needed it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and would not, to obtain mercy of a man, be unfaithful either to God or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth: And since there was no remedy it would be a kindness to the king to know his doom, that, being no surprise to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, that told them the king of Babylon should not come at all, or when he was withdrawn, should not come again against them, ver. 19. *Where are now your prophets, that told you you should have*

peace? Note, Those that deceive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy, will justly be twitted with it, when the event hath undeceived them.

(2.) He improved this opportunity for the presenting of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, ver. 18—20. It was not in Jeremiah's power to reverse this sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him, and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king, *What have I offended against thee, or thy servants, or this people, what law have I broke, what injury have I done to the common welfare, that ye have put me in prison?* And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with, has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, ver. 20. *Cause me not to return to yonder noisome gaol, to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there*: This was the language of innocent nature, sensible of its own grievances, and solicitous for his own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When Jeremiah delivered God's message, he spake as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request, he spake as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness: *Hear me, I pray thee. O my lord the king, let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee*. Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offering to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us, that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must carry ourselves with the humility and modesty that becomes dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause, must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king. 1. He gave him his request, took care that he should not die in the dungeon, but ordered he should have the liberty of the court of the prison, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. 2. He gave him more than his request, took care he should not die for want, as many did that had their heels at liberty, by reason of the straits of the siege; he ordered him his daily bread out of the public stock (for the prison was within the verge of the court) till all the bread was spent. Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that, it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his suffering servants that are faithful to him. He can make even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them, and raise up such friends to provide for them, as that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. *At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh*.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him as a criminal, he used him as a privy-counsellor. Here, 1. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, ver. 1—6. 2. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and confined only in the court of the prison, ver. 7—12. 3. He has a private conference with the king upon the present conjuncture of affairs, ver. 14—23. 4. Care is taken to keep that conference private, ver. 24—28.

1. THEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. 4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hands: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. 6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison; and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7. ¶ Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;) 8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city. 10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian

Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Here is, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching; what he had many a time said, he still saith, *ver. 3. This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*; though it hold out long, it will be taken at last; nor would he have so often repeated this unwelcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised; *ver. 2. Let him not stay in the city, he hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he shall live*; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter, *Satis est prostrasse leoni*, and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city. Note, Those do better for themselves, who patiently submit to the rebukes of providence, than those who contend with them. And if we cannot have our liberty, we must reckon it a mercy, to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

2. The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country, and to his trust as a prophet, though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness, and though at this time he eat the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him, and complained that he abused the liberty he had of walking in the court of the prison, for though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him; and therefore, *ver. 4. they represent him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to his country, and to the government he lived under: he seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt*; an unjust insinuation! for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done: They represent his preaching as having an ill tendency? the design of it was plainly to bring men to repent and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a strengthening to the hands both of the soldiery and of the burghers, and yet they represent it as *weakening their hands*, and discouraging them, which, if it did, it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only because they shew them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah hereupon, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with design he shall perish there. Zedekiah, though he was under convictions that Jeremiah was a prophet, sent of God, yet he had not courage to own his convictions, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors, *ver. 3. He is in your hand*, and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign, that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, *chap. xxxvi. 25.* but now they were more violent against him, a sign they were ripening apace for ruin. Had it been in a cause that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know, that the king is he who can do what he pleaseth, whether they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks, and truckles to them, *The king is not he that can do any thing against you*. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for, who, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do to prevent mischief designed them. The princes having this general warrant from the king, presently put poor Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison, *ver. 6.* a deep dungeon, for they let him down into it with cords; and a dirty one, for there was no water in it, but mire, stinking mire; and he sunk in the mire, up to the neck, saith Josephus: they that put him here doubtless designed he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing, if they should put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would say, and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and starved to death in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress, but he tells us himself, *Lam. iii. 55. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon*, and *ver. 57. Thou drewest near, saying, Fear not*.

4. Application is made to the king by an honest courtier Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer.

Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who probably sought opportunities to do good. It may be, he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's house, *ver. 7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and in a very corrupt degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts: There were saints even in *Cajur's household*. The king was now sitting in the gate of Benjamin, to try causes, and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there; thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; the prophet might have perished if he had trifled, or put it off till he had an opportunity of speaking to the king in private. No time must be lost when life is in danger, especially so valuable a life. He boldly asserts that Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it; though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant for what they did. Whither should oppressed innocency flee for protection but to the throne, especially when great men are its oppressors. Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter; he doth not mince the matter, though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will, *These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah*; They deal unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they had dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death, for if they had let him alone where he was, he was likely to die for hunger in the place where he was, in the court of the prison to which he was confined, for there was no more bread in the city; the stores out of which he was to have his allowance, *chap. xxxvi. 21.* were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress, where they little thought of them; and spirit men for his service even beyond expectation!

5. Orders are immediately given for his release, and Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king, who, but now, durst do nothing against the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and

will now have Jeremiah released in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no less than thirty men, and these of the life-guard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, *ver. 10.* Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God, we may succeed better than we could have thought; for the hearts of kings are in the hand of God. Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news; and it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related; for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love which is shewed to his people or ministers, no nor any circumstance of it, *Heb. vi. 10.* special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up, his arm-holes being probably galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, lest they should be lost in the mire, but carefully let them down, *ver. 11, 12.* Note, Those that are in distress should not only be relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect; all which shall be placed to account, and amount to a good account in the day of recompence. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, no more than broken meat: even in the king's house, and under the treasury too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, in the court of the prison, *ver. 13.* Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to have got him his discharge from thence also, now he had the king's ear, but he thought him safer, and better provided for there, than he would be any where else. God can, when he pleaseth, make a prison to become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

14. ¶ Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. 15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? 16. So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. 17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: 18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. 19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. 21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me: 22. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house, shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back. 23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire. 24. ¶ Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. 25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: 26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. 27. Then came all the princes, unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived. 28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken; and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and here again, though, *ver. 5.* he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was in the breast of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and his corruptions. Observe,

1. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon, he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the third entry, or, as the margin reads it, the principal entry, that is in, or leads towards, or adjoins to the house of the Lord, *ver. 14.* In appointing this place or interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to shew a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing, it should rather be rendered, a word: I am here asking thee

for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort, *word from the Lord*, chap. xxxvii. 17. Whatever word thou hast for me, *hide it not from me*, let me know the worst. He had been told plainly what things would come to in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

2. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him before he would give him his advice, *ver. 15*. He would indent, (1.) For his own safety; Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; and if I do, faith Jeremiah, *wilt thou not put me to death?* I am afraid, *thou wilt*, so some take it; what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes? Or, Wilt thou promise that thou wilt not? Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached with his blood, when he was called to it; but, in doing our duty, we ought to use all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so. (2.) He would indent for the success of his advice, being no less concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give his wholesome advice, and doth not upbraid him with his unkindness in suffering him to be put into the dungeon, nor bid him go and consult with his princes, whose judgments he had such a value for: Ministers must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous he should *hear counsel and receive instruction*. *Wilt thou not hearken unto me?* Surely thou wilt, I am in hopes to find thee pliable at last, and now in *this thy day* willing to know the things that belong to thy peace. Note, Then, and then only, there is hopes of sinners, when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly, *If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me*; I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and then I had as good keep my counsel to myself. Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice: though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself at liberty when he doth know it to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But, as to the prophet's safety, he promiseth him upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise with an oath, that whatever he should say to him, no advantage should be taken against him for it, *I will neither put thee to death, nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will*, *ver. 16*. This he thought was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, *Dan. ii. 48. and v. 29*. Zedekiah's oath on this occasion is solemn and very observable, *As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul*, who gave me my life and thee thine; therefore I dare not take away thy life unjustly, knowing that then I should forfeit my own to him that is the Lord of life. Note, God is the father of spirits: souls are his workmanship, and they are more *fearfully and wonderfully made* than bodies are. The soul both of the greatest prince and of the poorest prisoner, is of God's making; he *fashioneth their hearts alike easily*. In all our appeals to God, and in our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that *the living God made us these souls*.

3. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of the Lord the God of hosts, and God of Israel; not as a statesman, but as a prophet, he adviseth him by all means to surrender himself and his city to the king of Babylon's princes, *go forth to them*, and make the best terms thou canst with them, *ver. 17*. This was the same advice he had given to the people, *ver. 2*, and before, *chap. xxi. 9*. to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the meanest, is so to the greatest, for *there is no respect of persons with him*. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death. (1.) If he will tamely yield, he shall have his children from the sword, and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out: If he will but acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy, *the city shall not be burnt, and thou shalt live, and thy house*. But, (2.) If he will obstinately stand it out, he will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem, *ver. 18*. for when God judgeth he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God, let them humbly submit to his grace and government, and they shall live; let them take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace; but if they harden their hearts against his proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction: They must either bend or break.

4. The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, *ver. 19*. Jeremiah spoke to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what the mind of God was, he should immediately have acquiesced in it, and resolve to observe it without disputing: but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advanceth against it some prudential considerations of his own; but human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counsels. All he suggests is, *I am afraid*, not of the Chaldeans, their princes are men of honour, but of the Jews, that are already gone over to the Chaldeans, when they see me follow them, who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, *Art thou also become as weak as water?* *Isa. xiv. 10*. Now, (1.) It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a gay humour, as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. (2.) If he should be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not despise it and make light of it? What harm would it do him? Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their interest. (3.) Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender, whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a lesser evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

5. The pressing opportunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He assures him, that if he would comply with the will of God herein, the thing he feared should not come upon him, *ver. 20*. *They shall not deliver thee up*, but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length do well for himself, *Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord*, because it is his voice, so it shall be well unto thee. But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey. (1.) He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himself into their hands: If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily; *thou shalt not escape*, as thou hopest to do, *ver. 23*. (2.) He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a concern for the

preservation of. *Thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire*, for by a little submission and self-denial thou mightest have prevented it. Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and willfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. (3.) Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering, he should certainly fall under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from women too, *ver. 22*. The court ladies that were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away, will now, at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, *The men of thy peace*, whom thou didst consult with and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldst be ruled by them; they have *set thee on*, have encouraged thee to be bold and brave, and hold out to the last extremity; and see what comes of it: They, by prevailing upon thee, have prevailed against thee, and thou findest those thy real enemies, that would be thought thine only friends.

Now *thy feet are sunk in the mire*, thou art embarrassed, and hast no way to help thyself: thy feet cannot get forward, but are *turned away back*. Thus will Zedekiah be bantered by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, *ver. 23*. Note, That what we seek to avoid by sin, will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that decline the way of duty for fear of reproach, will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of disobedience. *The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him*, *Prov. x. 24*.

6. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private, *ver. 24*. *Let no man know of these words*. He doth not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider of it; for so obstinate has he been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that though he had good counsel given him, he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He hath nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them.

(1.) Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had passed between the king and him. Zedekiah is concerned to keep it private, nor so much for Jeremiah's safety, for he knew the princes could do him no hurt without his permission, but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences, *2 Cor. v. 11*, but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness, than have it known that they do: such, it is to be feared, *love the praise of men more than the praise of God*.

(2.) He is instructed what to say to the princes if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, *ver. 25, 26*. and he did tell them so, *ver. 27*. and, no doubt, it was true: he would not let slip so fair an opportunity of engaging the king's favour; so that it was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we must be so harmless as doves, as never to tell a wilful lie, yet we must be so wise as serpents, as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.

C H A P. XXXIX.

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem out of the hands of the king of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered the prediction, so the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event, for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to disprove the false flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's messengers. We are here told, (1.) That Jerusalem; after eighteen months siege, was taken by the Chaldean army, *ver. 1—3*. (2.) That king Zedekiah attempting to make his escape, was seized and made a miserable captive to the king of Babylon, *ver. 4—7*. (3.) That Jerusalem was burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor, *ver. 8—10*. (4.) That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah; and took particular care of him, *ver. 11—14*. (5.) That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desolation, *ver. 15—18*.

1. IN the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. 3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarfchim, Rab-faris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4. ¶ And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain. 5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7. Moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. 8. ¶ And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people,

people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We are told in the close of the foregoing chapter, that *Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the prison, until the day that Jerusalem was taken.* He gave the princes no farther disturbance by his prophesying, nor they him by their persecutions, for he had no more to say than what he had said, and the siege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. And see here what it came to.

1. The city is at length taken by storm, for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it. Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month, ver. 1. in the depth of winter: Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege: they intermitted it a while, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about Midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened with famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, ver. 2. Jerusalem was so strong a place that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, *I am. iv. 12.* But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection: and then, like Samson, when his hair is cut, it is weak as other cities.

2. The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, ver. 3. Some think it was the same with that which is called the second gate, Zeph. i. 10. which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other; here they cautiously made a halt, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dear as they could, until they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders. The princes are here named, rough and uncouth names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made; there where Eliakim and Hilkia, who bare the name of the God of Israel, used to sit, now sit Nergal-sharezzer, and Shamzar-nebo, &c. who bare the names of the heathen gods. Rabaris and Rab-mag are supposed to be not the names of distinct persons, but the titles of those whose names go before: Sa-fecchim was Rabaris, i.e. captain of the guard, and Nergal-sharezzer, to distinguish him from the other of the same name that is put first, is called Rab-mag camp-master, either muster-master or quarter-master: these and other the great generals sat in the gate. And now was fulfilled what Jeremiah prophesied long since, chap. i. 15. that the families of the kingdoms of the north should sit every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem; justly do the princes of the heathen sit up themselves there, where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

3. Zedekiah having in defiance perhaps seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to suit for his own safety, and loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night, ver. 4. which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, and overtaken; though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plain of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers, ver. 5. thence he was brought prisoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence upon him as a rebel, not sentence of death, but one may almost say, a worse thing. For, (1.) He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The deaths of these sweet babes must needs be to many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obduracy was the cause of it, for he was particularly told of this thing, chap. xxxviii. 23. *They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans.* (2.) He slew all the nobles of Judah, ver. 6. probably, not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course, it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off, but the great men of the country who were innocent of the matter. (3.) He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out, ver. 7. condemning him to darkness for life, who had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk on in darkness, *Phil. i. 5.* (4.) He bound him with two brazen chains or fetters (so the margin reads it) to carry him away to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2 Kings xx. 4, &c.

4. Some time after the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, ver. 8. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to thee.* O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mightest have prevented, if thou wouldst but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time.

5. The people that were left were all carried away captives to Babylon, ver. 9. now they must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it; must be driven some hundreds of miles, like beasts, before the conquerors, that were now their cruel masters; must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to them who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The word *Tyrant* is originally a Chaldee word, and is often used for *Lords* by the Chaldee paraphrast, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other: we have reason to think the poor Jews had reason to say so. Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to tarry at home, but the captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the same time, such as they were never masters of before, ver. 10. Observe here, 1. The wonderful changes of providence; some are abased, others advanced, 1 Sam. ii. 5. the hungry are filled with good things, and the rich sent empty away. The ruin of some proves the rise of others. Let us therefore rejoice as though we rejoiced not in our abundance, and weep as though we wept not in our distresses. 2. The just retributions of providence: the rich had been proud oppressors, and now they are justly punished for their injustice: the poor had been patient sufferers, and now they are graciously rewarded for their patience, and amends made them for all their losses: for, *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth, even in this world, much more in the other.*

11. ¶ Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, 12. Take him, and look well to him and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee. 13. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezzer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes; 14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and commit-

ted him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people. 15. ¶ Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16. Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. 17. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. 18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sang of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

(1.) A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh, as Christ's followers, when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, Luke xxi. 28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and he should be in all respects well used, ver. 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy, ver. 13, 14.

Now we may look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet; doubtless he had received information concerning him from the deserters, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, that he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length) he gave him these extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of a great soul to take notice of the services and sufferings of the meaneſt. It was his mercifully done of the king to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it, even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel, they put him into prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes took him out. God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels, than among those that call themselves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa, than with Ananias the high-priest.

3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompence for his services, chap. xv. 11. *I will cause the enemy to treat thee well in the day of evil.* Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him, and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand, and himself safe. The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said should never come, chap. xiv. 15. which made their misery the more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors, were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the work of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

(2.) A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompence for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his pay-master. He relieved a prophet in the name of a prophet, and thus he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to shew that as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for his sake; and it was a token of special favour to both, and they ought so to account it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him, 1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and for his further satisfaction, in having been kind to Jeremiah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, ver. 15. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming: Though he was bravely bold in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the rod of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid. Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity. 3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity; *I will deliver thee, I will surely deliver thee.* He had been instrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the dungeon, and now God promiseth to deliver him; for he will be behind-hand with none for any service they do directly or indirectly for his name. Thou hast saved Jeremiah's life, that was precious to thee, and therefore thy life shall be given thee for a prey. 4. The reason given for this distinguishing favour God had in store for him is, *because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.* God, in recompensing men's services, has an eye to the principle they go upon in those services, and rewards according to those principles: And there is no principle of obedience that will be more acceptable to God, nor have a greater influence upon us, than a believing confidence in God. Ebed-melech trusted in God, that he would own him and stand by him, and then he was not afraid of the face of man. And those who trust God, as this good man did, in the way of duty, will find that their hope shall not make them ashamed in times of the greatest danger.

C H A P. XL.

We have attended Jerusalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book, perhaps we may in Ezekiel, and must in this and the four following chapters observe the story of those few Jews that were left to remain in the land, after their brethren were carried away, and it is a very melancholy story; for, though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as obstinate in sin as ever, unhumiliated and unreformed, till all the rest of the judgments threat-

ened in Deut. xxviii. being brought upon them, that which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threatenings, was accomplished. The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again. In this chapter we have, 1. A more particular account of Jeremiah's discharge, and his settlement with Gedaliah, ver. 1—6. 2. The great resort of the Jews that remained scattered in the neighbouring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor under the king of Babylon; and the good posture they were in for a while under him, ver. 7—12. 3. A treacherous design formed against Gedaliah, by Ishmael, which we shall find executed in the next chapter, ver. 13—16.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. 2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3. Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5. Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems misapplied, the word which came to Jeremiah, for here is nothing of prophecy in this chapter, but it is to be referred to chap. xlii. 7. where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained, and the story betwixt, and that is only to introduce that prophecy, and shew the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood; and Jeremiah being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it.

In these verses we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, chap. xxxix. 15. but afterwards being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest, and hurried away: Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse; a man of sorrows indeed! But when the captives were brought manacled to Ramah, not far off, where a council of war, or court-martial, was held, for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was soon distinguished from the rest, and, by special order of the court, was discharged.

1. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet, ver. 2, 3. The Lord thy God, whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spoken, has by thee pronounced this evil upon this place; they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now the Lord hath brought it, and, as by thy mouth he said it, so by my hand he hath done what he said. He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfil that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretel; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, it was because ye have sinned against the Lord that this thing is come upon you. The princes of Israel would never be brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sun-beam: But this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness, would never have been abandoned thus, had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told this from the pulpit by their prophets, and they would not regard it; now they are told it from the bench by their conqueror, whom they dare not contradict, and who will make them regard it. Note, Sooner or later men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He loosed him from his chains a second time, ver. 4. invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion, and I will set my eye upon thee, so the word is: not only I will look well to thee, but I will shew thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for: but if he were not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the dispose of the conquerors: He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another, may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He adviseth him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was made governor of the land under the king of Babylon, an honest Jew, who (it is probable) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well, that he had this great trust put into his hands, ver. 5. While Jeremiah was not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do. Nebuzar-adan perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon, nor determined whither to go, turned the scale for him, and bid him by all means go to Gedaliah. Sudden thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it: Go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee. It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unfriendly to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let

Jeremiah steer what course he pleaseth, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he doth for the best. Nor doth he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support, he gave him victuals, and a present, either in cloaths or money, and so let him go. See how considerate the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah: He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, ver. 6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence, I know not; the event doth not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort: However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that, unless he were forced out of it as Ezekiel, and Daniel, and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land, than with princes in an unholy one.

7. ¶ Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11. Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; 12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much. 13. ¶ Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish? 16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We have in these verses,

(1.) A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness, after the many years of trouble and terror with which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars,

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made governor in the land, by the king of Babylon, ver. 7. To shew that he designed to make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who they might be sure would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father, chap. xxvi. 24. that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

2. There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion, came and put themselves under his government and protection. 1. The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force, came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah, for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named, ver. 8. they came with their men, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. 2. The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bare to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority there, ver. 11, 12. Canaan itself would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there was no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there was. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here in wrath God remembered mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath, *ver. 9. He swore to them, and to their men.* It is probable, according to the warrant and instructions he had received from the king of Babylon, who empowered him to give them these assurances. 1. They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans. Come (said Gedaliah) *Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: Fear not the sin of it.* Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. Fear not the reproach of it, and the disparagement it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and your's miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehended him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. *Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.* If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger, when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably, by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king, *ver. 10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, to do homage to the king in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they come to us.* All that passeth between them and the Chaldeans, shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of an oath, that he will do his part in protecting them, but being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, he did not require an oath from them, that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and, by joining it with Gedaliah, they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government, that they should *serve the king of Babylon.* But, 2. Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them, *ver. 10. Gather ye wine and summer-fruits, and take them for your own use, put them in your vessels, to be laid up for winter-store, as those do that live in a land of peace, and hope to eat the labour of your hand; nay, the labour of other people's hands, for you reap what they sowed; nay, perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured.* And accordingly we find, *ver. 12. that they gathered wine and summer-fruits very much, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken.* While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and for ought appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many.

(2.) Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted? For when God begins in judgment, he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That *Baalis the king of the Ammonites* had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, *ver. 14.* Some make Baalis to signify the queen mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe, when the great king of Babylon protected it, and yet it is ruined by the artifices of this petty prince or princess. Happy they that have the King of kings on their side, who can take the wife in their own craftiness! for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed *Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah*, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah; and that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, directed him to go and enrol himself among his subjects, and promise him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is the human nature corrupted and degenerated (even in those that pretend to the best blood) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, that was not, as he was, of David's line, though he were never so much of David's spirit.

3. That *Johanan*, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted, he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain. *Dost thou certainly know?* i. e. sure thou dost, *ver. 14.* He gave him private intelligence of it, *ver. 15.* hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He proffered his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac. *I will slay him: Wherefore should he slay thee?* Herein he shewed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for if it be lawful to kill for prevention, who then can be safe, since malice always suspects the worst?

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery. He said, *Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.* Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocence of the dove, than the wisdom of the serpent. Princes become uneasy to themselves and all about them when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said, she would believe no more evil by her people, than a mother would believe by her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of those about them.

C H A P. XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shews, that evil pursues sinners. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter, here bursts in a dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped the captivity, were proud to think that they were still in their own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not whither; were fond of the wine and summer-fruits, they had gathered, and were very secure under Gedaliah's protectorship, when, on a sudden, even these remains prove ruins too. 1. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by Ishmael, ver. 1—2. 2. All the Jews that were with him were slain likewise, ver. 3. and a pit filled with their dead bodies, ver. 9. 3. Some devout men, to the number of fourscore, that were going towards Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered likewise, ver. 4—7. Only ten of them escaped, ver. 8. 4. Those that escaped the sword, were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off towards the country of the Ammonites, ver. 10. 5. By the conduct and courage of Johanan, though the death of the slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered, and he now becomes their commander in chief, ver. 11—16. 6. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt, ver. 17, 18. which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. 2. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war. 4. And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it. 5. That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand to bring them to the house of the LORD. 6. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7. And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him. 8. But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren. 9. Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men (whom he had slain because of Gedaliah) was it which Aza the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain. 10. Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's permitting, or men's perpetrating such villainies as here we find committed. Such base, barbarous, bloody work is here done by men, who by their birth should have been men of honour, by their religion just men, and this done upon those of their own nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now their brethren in affliction, when they were all brought under the power of the victorious Chaldeans, and smiting under the judgments of God, upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of advantage: all done, not only in cold blood, but with art and management: We have scarce such an instance of perfidious cruelty in all the scripture; so that with John, when he saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, we may well wonder with great admiration. But God permitted it for the completing of the ruin of an unhumiliated people, and the filling up of the measure of their judgments, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Let it possess us with an indignation at the wickedness of men, and an awe of God's righteousness.

1. Ishmael and his party treacherously killed Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the king of Babylon had made him a great man, had given him a commission to be *governor of the land* which he had conquered; though God had made him a good man, and a great blessing to his country, and his agency for his welfare was as life from the dead, yet neither could secure him. Ishmael was of the seed royal, *ver. 1.* and therefore jealous of Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he should merit and accept a commission under the king of Babylon. He had ten men with him, that were princes of the king too, guided by the same peevish resentments that he was; these had been with Gedaliah before, *chap. xl. 8.* to put themselves under his protection, *chap. xl. 8.* and now came again to make him a visit; and they did eat bread together in Mizpah. He entertained them generously, and entertained no jealousy of them, notwithstanding the information given him by Johanan. They pretended friendship to him, and gave him no warning to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to them, and did all he could to oblige them, but they that did eat bread with him lift up the heel against him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but watched an opportunity, when they had him alone, and assassinated him, *ver. 2.*

2. They likewise put all to the sword that they found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any capacity to revenge his death, *ver. 3.* As if enough of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the Chaldeans, their own princes here mingle it with the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dressers and the husbandmen were busy in the fields, and knew nothing of this bloody massacre; so artfully was it carried on and concealed!

3. Some good honest men, that were going all in tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered with the rest. Observe, 1. From whence they came, *ver. 5. from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh,* places that had been famous, but were now reduced; they belonged to the ten tribes, but there were some in those countries that retained an affection for the worship of the God of Israel. 2. Whither they were going; *to the house of the Lord,* the temple at Jerusalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their respects to its ashes, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them: They favour the dust thereof, *Psal. cii. 14.* They took offerings and incense in their hand, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they shewed their good-will, as Abraham, when he came to the place of the altar, though the altar was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the house

of the Lord, but these went in the habit of mourners, with *their clothes rent, and their heads shaven*; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past. 3. How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's malice: Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too; so blood-thirsty was he! He seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite, or the face of an honest man; these pilgrims towards Jerusalem he had a spite to for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they, and to try how they stood affected to Gedaliah and his government, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. *He said, Come to Gedaliah*, pretending he would have them come and live with him, when he really intended they should come and die with him, *ver. 6.* They had heard such a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but Ishmael, when he had them in the midst of the town, fell upon them and *flew them*, *ver. 7.* and, no doubt, took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder, would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great pit, *ver. 7.* the same pit that Aza, king of Judah had digged long before, either in the city, or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, 1 Kings xi. 22. to be a frontier garrison against Baasha king of Israel, and for fear of him, *ver. 9.* Note, Those that dig pits with a good intention, yet know not what ill use they may be put to one time or other. He flew so many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit.

Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter, there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness of those that had them at their mercy, *ver. 8.* They said to Ishmael, when he was about to suck their blood, like an insatiable lion, *felech*, after that of their companions, *Slay us not; for we have treasures in the field*, i. e. country treasures, large stocks upon the ground, abundance of such commodities as the country affords, *wheat and barley, and oil and honey*; intimating, that they would discover it to him, and put him in possession of it all, if he would spare them. *Sken for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life.* This bait prevailed; Ishmael saved them, not for the love of mercy, but the love of money. Here were riches kept for the owners thereof, not to their hurt, *Eccles. v. 13.* and to cause them to lose their lives, *Job xxxi. 39.* but to their good and the preserving of their lives. Solomon observes, that sometimes the ransom of a man's life is his riches. But those who think thus to bribe death, when it comes with commission, and pleads with it, saying, *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*, will and death inexorable, and themselves wretchedly deceived.

4. He carried off the people prisoners; the king's daughters, whom the Chaldeans feared not for troubling themselves with, when they had the king's sons; and the poor of the land, the vine-dressers and husbandmen, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners towards the country of the Ammonites, *ver. 10.* Ishmael, probably, intending to make a profit of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country, that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us, never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come then, when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These here thought, *Surely the bitterness of death, and of captivity, is past*, and yet some died by the sword, and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11. ¶ But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done. 12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon. 13. Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad. 14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. 15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, (after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam) even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs whom he had brought again from Gibeon: 17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt, 18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treasonable design, though he could not obtain leave to go kill Ishmael, and to prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he and his captains, and their forces, might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and a terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief, without the effusion of blood: But it seems they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble, are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length, they hear of all the evil that Ishmael had done, *ver. 11.* and are resolved to try an after-gamble, which we have an account in these verses.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood; it was pity but their blood should have been shed; and it

is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, and went to fight with Ishmael, *ver. 12.* up on notice of the murders he had committed, (for though he concealed it for a time, *ver. 4.* yet murder will out) and which way he was gone, he pursued him, and overtook him by the great pool of Gibeon, which we read of, 2 Sam. ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy that was something like a match for him. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives were glad when they saw Johanan, and the captives that were with him, looking upon them as their deliverers, *ver. 13.* and they presently found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, *ver. 14.* Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives stayed not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear, and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his prey to save his life, and escaped with eight men, *ver. 15.* It seems, two of his ten men, that were his handitti or assassins, spoken of, *ver. 1.* either over-run him, or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegade, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sitten down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them such a trace into the land of Egypt, as Ishmael would have led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to complete their ruin, even after they were as they thought redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them! 1. The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would save them but they would go to enter into Egypt, *ver. 17.* and, in order to that, they encamped for a time in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem, David's city. Probably, it was some land which David gave to Chimham, the son of Barzillai, which, though it returned to David's family, at the year of jubilee, yet still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his head quarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country, or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the mighty men of war, it seems, had escaped, those he took with him, and the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged. 2. The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended they were afraid of the Chaldeans, that they would come and do I know not what with them, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, *ver. 18.* I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge it upon those who appeared so vigorously against the murderers: But they only make use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancles, which was to strong in them to return into Egypt. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears, that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

C H A P. XLII.

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, 1. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them about consulting God in this matter, *ver. 1-6.* 2. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their enquiry; in which, (1.) They are commanded and encouraged to continue in the land of Judah, and assured, that if they did so, it should be well with them, *ver. 7-12.* (2.) They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did it would be their ruin, *ver. 13-18.* 3. They are charged with dissimulation in their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is passed upon them for it, *ver. 19-22.*

1. THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, 2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) 3. That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. 4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. 5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. 6. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael, it seems he did, and it was not the first time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also, that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet have they not returned to the Lord: This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But

But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is hearkened out, and *all the captains, Jehonah himself* not accepted, with *all the people from the least to the greatest*, make him a visit; they *came near*, ver. 1. which intimates, that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him. Now here,

1. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, *ver. 2, 3.* They express themselves wonderful well, (1.) With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of: *Let, we beseech thee, our supplications be accepted before thee.* They compliment him thus, in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say. (2.) With a great opinion of his interest in heaven. *Pray for us*, who know not how to pray for ourselves: *Pray to the Lord thy God*, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him. (3.) With a great sense of their need of divine direction; they speak of themselves as objects of compassion, *we are but a remnant, but a few of many*; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity it should. *Thine eyes see what distress we are in*, what a plunge we are at; if thou canst do anything, help us. (4.) With desire of a divine conduct, *Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts*, and under his hand, and *show us the way wherein we may walk*, and may expect to have his presence with us, *and the thing that we may do*, the course we may take for our own safety. Note, In every difficult doubtful case, our eye must be up to God for direction: They then might expect to be directed by a *spirit of prophecy*, which is now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a *spirit of wisdom*, in our hearts, and the hints of providence.

2. Jeremiah faithfully promiseth them to pray for direction for them, and whatever message God should send to them by him, he would deliver it to them just as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminishing, *ver. 4.* Ministers may hence learn, 1. Conscientiously to pray for those who desire their prayers: *I will pray for you, according to your words.* Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel, when he was slighted, he will not *sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. 2. Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God, *not keeping back any thing that is profitable for them*, whether it be pleasing or no, but to *declare to them the whole counsel of God*, that they may approve themselves true to their trust.

3. They fairly promise, that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is, *ver. 5, 6.* and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sincerity herein, though at the same time they dissembled: *The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us*, i. e. do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it: and for this, the Lord the Judge be judge between us. Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers prayers, must conscientiously hearken to their preaching and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better said than this here, *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us.* 1. They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so. *ver. 5. I will pray to the Lord your God.* He is ours, and therefore *we will obey his voice.* Our relation to God strongly obligeth us to obedience. 2. They promise to *obey his voice*, because they sent the prophet to him to consult him. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God, if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it. 3. It is an implicit universal obedience that they here promise: They will do what God appoints them to do, *whether it be good, or whether it be evil*: Though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interests, if it be our duty, we will do it. 4. It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, *that it may be well with us*; which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms.

7. ¶ And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah. 8. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, 9. And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him, 10. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. 11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. 12. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. 13. ¶ But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God. 14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: (15. And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;) 16. Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die. 17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there, they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them will remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. 18. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As

mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem: so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt; and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more. 19. ¶ The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. 20. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. 21. And now I have this day declared it to you: but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. 22. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask counsel of God.

1. It did not come presently, not till *ten days after*, ver. 7. They were thus long held in suspense, perhaps to punish them for their hypocrisy, or to shew that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, nor what he would, for he could not speak when he would, but must wait for instructions. However, it teacheth us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way; *The vision is for an appointed time, and in the end it shall speak.*

2. When it did come he delivered it publicly, both to the *captains*, and to all the *people*, from the meanest to those in the highest station; he delivered it fully and faithfully as he received it, as he had promised that he would keep nothing back from them. If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to advise them to, the case was so difficult; but what he has to advise is what *the Lord the God of Israel saith*, to whom they had sent him, and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to observe it. And this he tells them,

(1.) That it is the will of God that they should stay where they were; and his promise, that if they do so it shall undoubtedly be *well with them*: he would have them still to *abide in this land*, ver. 10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and it was their affliction; let them therefore count it a mercy that they may stay in it, and a duty to stay in it. Let those whose lot is in Canaan, never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to oblige them, if God had only said, I charge you, upon your allegiance, to *abide still in the land*; but he rather persuades them to it as a friend, than commands it as a Prince.

1. He expresseth a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition; *It repenteth me of the evil that I have done unto you.* Though they had shewn small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one grieved for the misery of Israel, Judg. x. 16. begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their sins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himself concerning his servants, is when he sees that here their strength is gone, and *there is none shut up or left*, Deut. xxxii. 36.

2. He answers the argument they had against *abiding in this land*; they feared the king of Babylon, chap. xli. 18. lest he should come and avenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they were no way accessory to it, may had witnessed against it. The summe was foreign and unreasonable; but if there had been any ground for it, enough is here said to remove it, *ver. 12. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon* though he is a man of great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whose will is a law, and therefore you are afraid he will, upon this pretence, though without colour of reason, take advantage against you: *Be not afraid of him*, for that fear will bring a snare; fear not him, for *I am with you*; and if God be for you to save you, who can be against you to hurt you? Thus has God provided to obviate and silence even the causeless fears of his people, which discourage them in the way of their duty; there is enough in the promises to do it.

3. He assures them, that if they will still abide in this land, they shall not only be safe from the king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of kings: *I will build you and plant you*; you shall take root again, and be the new foundation of another state: a phoenix-kingdom rising out of the ashes of the last. It is added, *ver. 12. I will shew mercies unto you.* Note, In all our comforts we may read God's mercies. God will shew them mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon shall not destroy them, but he shall *have mercy upon them*, and help to settle them. Note, Whatever kindness men do us, we must attribute it to God's kindness. He makes those whom he pities to be pitied, even by *those that carried them captives*, Psal. cvi. 46. The king of Babylon having now the disposal of the country, shall *cause you to return to your own land*, i. e. shall settle you again in your own habitations, and put you in possession of the lands that formerly belonged to you. Note, God has made that our duty which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own recompence. *Abide in this land*, and it shall be your own land again, and you shall continue in it. Do not out-run it, now you stand so fair for the enjoyment of it again. Be not so unwise as to *forsake your own mercies for lying vanities.*

(2.) That as they tender the favour of God and their own happiness, they must by no means think of going into Egypt? not thither, of any place; not to that land out of which God had delivered their fathers, and which, he had so often warned them not to make alliance with, nor to put confidence in. Observe here,

1. The sin they are supposed to be guilty of, and to him that knew their hearts it was more than a supposition. You begin to say, *We will not dwell in this land*, ver. 13. we will never think that we can be safe if it, no not though God himself undertake our protection; we will not continue in it, no not in obedience to the voice of the Lord our God: He may say what he pleaseth, but we will do what we please: We will go into the land of Egypt, and there will we dwell, whether God give us leave, and go along with us, or no, ver. 14. It is supposed that their hearts were upon it; *If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt*, and obstinately resolved that ye will go and sojourn there, though God oppose you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows. Now the reason they go upon in this resolution is, that in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread, as we have had for a long time in this land, ver. 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think by changing our place to out-run the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every

way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

2. The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it: It is pronounced in God's name, *ver. 15. Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah*, that think because you are a remnant you must be spared of course, *ver. 2.* and indulged in your own humour. (1.) Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very judgments shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them and overcome them there, *ver. 16, 17.* ye think because war and famine have long been raging in this land, they are entailed upon it; whereas if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land, you shall get out of the reach of them. But God will send them after you wherever you go. Note, The evils we think to escape by sin, we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find they are deceived, and they do not at all mend themselves; the grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go: all our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were. 2. Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt, *ver. 18. As my anger and fury have been poured out here upon Jerusalem*, so it shall be poured out upon you in Egypt. Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy, will find him a consuming fire wherever they go. And then ye shall be an execration and an astonishment. The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians, *Gen. xliii. 32.* and now they shall be made more so than ever. When God's professing people mingle themselves with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity, and make themselves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocrisy in their enquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them do, they were resolved to take their own way, and therefore the sentence which was before pronounced conditionally is made absolute. Having set before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes application of what he had said. And here, (1.) He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, *ver. 19.* The conclusion of the whole matter is, *Go not down into Egypt*, you disobey the command of God if you do, and what I have said to you will be a witness against you; for know certainly, that whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I have plainly admonished you, you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God. (2.) He chargeth them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction, *ver. 20. Ye dissembled in your hearts*, you pretended one thing and intended another, and promised what you never meant to perform; *you have used deceit against your souls*; so the margin reads it: for those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves. (3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God: probably they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spake from him who knew their hearts, *Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God*, i. e. ye have not a disposition to obey it. Thus Moses in the close of his farewell sermon, had told them, *Deut. xxxi. 2. I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck*—and that ye will corrupt yourselves. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those whom he knows will not regard him, and deal with those who he knows will deal treacherously, *Isa. xlviii. 8.* (4.) He therefore reads them their doom, ratifying what he had said before, *Know certainly that ye shall die by the sword*, *ver. 22.* God's threatenings may be vitiated, but cannot be nullified by the unbelief of man. Famine and pestilence shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arrests, nor can any malefactors go out of God's jurisdiction. *Ye shall die in the place whither ye desire to go.* Note, We know not what is good for ourselves, and that often proves afflictive, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of, and have our hearts most set upon.

C H A P. XLIII.

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it, but we find it quite otherwise. Here is, 1. The people's contempt of this message; they denied it to be the word of God, *ver. 1—3.* and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them, *ver. 4—7.* 2. God's pursuit of them with another message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt, *ver. 8—13.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, even all these words. 2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: 3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah. 5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were turned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6. Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they even to Tahpanhes.

What God said to the builders of Babel may be truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with, *Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do*, *Gen. xi. 6.* They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself saith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasily at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have to say to it.

1. They deny it to be a message from God. *Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely*, *ver. 2.* See here, (1.) What was the cause of their disobedience, it was pride, only by that comes contention both with God and man: they were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments, and the control of their designs, no not by the divine wisdom, by the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* *Exod. v. 2.* The proud unhumiliated heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell. (2.) What was the colour for their disobedience? They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God: *The Lord hath not sent thee* on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that what was said came from God, or (which I rather think) though they were convinced of it, they would not own it. The light shone strong in their face, but either they shut their eyes against it, or would not confess that they saw it. Note, The reason why men deny the scriptures to be the word of God is, because they are resolved not to conform themselves to scripture rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a wilful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from mount Sinai, they would have said it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them? What interest could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed? And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest, *ver. 3. Baruch sets thee on against us.* A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have said to take their lot with this despised ungrateful remnant. But the best services are no fences against malice and slander. Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him, as to make God's name an authority to patronize so villainous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry, are industrious to put it into an ill name. When men will persist in sin, they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours: It is well for them that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

2. They determine to go to Egypt however. They resolve not to dwell in the land of Judah, as God had ordered them, *ver. 4.* but to go themselves with one consent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah, out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave them to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, *ver. 5. men, women, and children*, *ver. 6.* a long journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Israel, yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land, and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men that they know not when they are well, and often ruin themselves by endeavouring to mend themselves: and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though never so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them, and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them, than to force them against their consciences; their's is the worst of tyranny, who say to men's souls, even to good men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*: partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way; though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe they were voluntary in going along with them: And who can blame them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, when the prophets themselves did? They came to Tahpanhes, a famous city of Egypt, so called from a queen of that name, 1 Kings xi. 19. the same with Hanes, *Isa. xxx. 4.* it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, *ver. 9.* no place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city, and near the court; so little mindful were they of Joseph's wisdom, who would have his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah, than in the most pompous populous cities of Egypt.

8. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, 9. Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah: 10. And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. 11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword. 12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. 13. He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

We have here Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt, and so we have in the next chapter. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were: he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites;

Israelites; but there, (1.) He received the word of the Lord; it came to him. God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and when his ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him. (2.) What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world.

Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver when he was in Egypt. We may suppose he did what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and instructing and comforting them, but only two messages of his which he had received immediately from God, are recorded: one in this chapter relating to Egypt itself, and foretelling the destruction of that; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt.

God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt, the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further, that the sword of Nebuchadrezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

1. This is foretold by a sign: Jeremiah must take great stones, such as are used for foundations, and lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln, which is in the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house, ver. 9. some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, *Exod. v. 7.* which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians, they know not Jeremiah's character, but in the sight of the men of Judah to whom he was sent, that since he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

(2.) It is foretold in express words, as express as can be,

(1.) That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in person against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, by the same token that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, ver. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in the belief of the extent and certainty of the divine prescience; to which the smallest and most contingent events are evident. God calls Nebuchadrezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, yet are the tools which his providence makes use of.

(2.) That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy, ver. 11. He shall smite the land of Egypt, and though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence, for that is here meant by death, as chap. xv. 2. By shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will he shall save alive, and carry into captivity. The Jews by going into Egypt brought the Chaldeans thither and so made but ill payment to those that entertained them. They who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon, exposed themselves to him.

(3.) That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples and the images of their gods, ver. 12. He shall burn the houses of the gods of Egypt, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; the fire of God's wrath fastens upon them, and then he burns some of them, and carries others captive, *Isa. xlv. 1.* Beth-shemesh, or the house of the sun, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall break in pieces, ver. 13. and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates, That he shall lay all waste, when even the temple and the images shall not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry, he had his temples and images in honour of the sun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man or wicked nation a scourge and plague to another.

(4.) That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause, or avenge its quarrel, ver. 12. He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt, both beautify and fortify himself with them, shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour, and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booty, yet being expert in war, and expeditions, he shall slip on with as much ease and in as little time in comparison, as a shepherd slips on his garment when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt, than of a shepherd's coat. And when he hath taken what he pleaseth, as Benhadad threatened to do, 1 Kings xx. 6. he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, *Ezek. xxix. 19.* and xxx. 10. Babylon lay at a great distance from Egypt, and yet from thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far fetched.

C H A P. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) An awakening sermon which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to reprove them for their idolatry, notwithstanding the warnings given them both by the word and rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it, ver. 1—14. (2.) The impudent and impious contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God, and Jeremiah, ver. 15—19. (3.) The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that they should all be cut off and perish in Egypt, except a very small number; and as a sign or earnest of it, the king of Egypt should shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them, ver. 20.—30.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2. Thus

saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein. 3. Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers. 4. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. 6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day. 7. Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10. They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you, and before your fathers. 11. ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword, and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. 13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: 14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

The Jews in Egypt were now dispersed into divers parts of the country, into Migdol and Noph, and other places, and Jeremiah is sent of an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together, in Pathros, ver. 15. or going about from place to place preaching to this purpose. He delivered this message in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and in it,

1. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives by the rivers of Babylon were daily mindful of (*Psal. cxxxvii.* 1.) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though they had not been so long out of sight as to become out of mind, ver. 2. Ye have seen what a deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into; now will you consider whence those desolations came? from the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire, which made Jerusalem and the cities of Judah waste and desolate, ver. 6. whoever were the instruments of the destruction, they were but instruments: it was a destruction from the Almighty.

2. He puts them in mind of the sins that brought those desolations upon Judah and Jerusalem, it was for their wickedness, that was it that provoked God to anger, and especially their idolatry, their serving other gods, ver. 3. and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, which should have been given to the true God only; they forsook the God that was known among them, and his name great, for gods that they knew not, upstart deities, whose original was obscure, and not worth taking notice of: Neither they, nor you, nor your fathers, could give any rational account why the God of Israel was exchanged for such impostors; they knew not that they were gods, nay, they could not but know that they were no gods.

3. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warning he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, ver. 4. The prophets were sent with a great deal of care to call to them, saying, O do not this abominable thing that I hate. It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation, as an abominable thing; it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth: Call it odious, call it grievous, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness: O do not do it! If you love God do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own souls do not, for it is destructive to them: Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield: O take heed: do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates; for if God hates it, thou shouldest hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No! they hearkened

hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, ver. 5. they still persisted in their idolatries, and you see what came of it, therefore God's anger was poured out upon them, *as at this day*. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which you should be startled and awakened, for they were inflicted *in terrorem*, that others might hear and fear, and do no more as they did, lest they fare as they fared.

4. He reproves them for, and upbraids them with, their continued idolatries now they were come into Egypt, *ver. 8. Ye burn incense to other gods in the land of Egypt*; therefore God so had them to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a snare to them. Those whom God sent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were there, by the power of God's grace, weaned from idolatry; but those who went against God's mind into the land of the Egyptians, were there, by the power of their own corruptions, more wedded than ever to their idolatries: for when we thrust ourselves without cause or call into places of temptation, it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In doing this, 1. They did a great deal of injury to themselves and their families. *You commit this great evil against your souls*, ver. 7. you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is false, you destroy them, for it will be fatal to them. Note, In sinning against God we sin against our own souls. It is the ready way to cut yourselves off from all comfort and hope, *ver. 8. to cut off your name and honour*; so that you will both by your sin and by your misery, become a curse and a reproach among all nations: It will become a proverb, As wretched as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from you all your relations, all that you should have joy of, and have your families built up in, *man and woman, child and suckling*, so that Judah shall be a land lost for want of heirs. 2. They filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers, and as if that had been too little for them, added to it, *ver. 9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of those that are gone before you*, that you are not humbled for it as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences of it? *Have you forgotten the punishments of your fathers?* so come read it. Do you not know how dear their idolatry cost them, and yet dare you continue in that vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, though ye received the curse with it? He minds them of the sins and punishments of the kings of Judah, who, as great as they were, escaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yea, and they should have taken warning by the wickedness of their wives, who had seduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, *And of his wives*, which Dr. Lightfoot thinks doth tacitly reflect upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah owed its original. Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the same wicked courses? See *Neh. xiii. 18—26*. Nay, to come to your own times, *Have you forgotten your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives*, when you lived in prosperity in Jerusalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas! to what purpose do I speak to them? saith God to the prophet, *ver. 10. They are not humbled unto this day*, by all the humbling providences that they have been under. *They have not feared, nor walked in my law*. Note, Those that walk not in the law of God, thereby shew that they are destitute of the fear of God.

5. He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting in their idolatry now they were in Egypt. Judgment is given against them, as before, *chap. xlii. 22. that they shall perish in Egypt*: the decree is gone forth, and shall not be called back; they set their faces to go into the land of Egypt, ver. 12. were resolute in their purpose against God, and now God is resolute in his purpose against them; *I will set my face to cut off all Judah*, ver. 11. They that think not only to affront, but to confront God Almighty, will find themselves out faced: *for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*, Psalm xxxiv. 16. It is here threatened concerning these idolatrous Jews in Egypt, 1. That they shall all be consumed, without exception, no degree or order among them shall escape, *they shall fall from the least to the greatest*, ver. 12. *high and low, rich and poor*. 2. That they shall be consumed by the very same judgments which God made use of for the punishment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pestilence, ver. 12, 13. They shall not be wasted by natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by these sore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt, they thought to get out of the reach of. 3. That none (except a very few that will narrowly escape) shall ever return to the land of Judah again, *ver. 14. They thought, being nearer, they should find a return to their own land, than those that were carried to Babylon*; yet those shall return, and these shall not; for the much surer way to any comfort, is that in which God has promised it to us, than that in which we have projected it for ourselves. Observe, how those that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy and fond of change wherever they are: This people, when they were in the land of Judah, desired to go into Egypt, *chap. xlii. 22. but when they were in Egypt they desired to return to the land of Judah again*; they lift up their soul to it, so it is in the margin, which notes an earnest desire. But because they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they shall not dwell there when they desire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to us. How can those expect to be well, that would not know when they were well, though God himself told them?

15. ¶ Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, 16. *As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee*. 17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?

We have here the people's obstinate refusal to submit to the power of the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah. We have scarce such an instance

of downright daring contradiction to God himself as this here, or such an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Observe,

1. The persons that did thus set God and his judgments at defiance: it was not some one that was thus obstinate, but the generality of the Jews; and they were such as knew either themselves or their wives to be guilty of the idolatry Jeremiah had reprov'd, *ver. 15. where we find*, 1. That the women had been more guilty of idolatry and superstition than the men, not because the men stuck closer to the true God and the true religion than the women, but, I fear, because they were generally atheists, and were for no God and no religion at all, and therefore could easily allow their wives to be of a false religion, and to worship false gods. 2. That it was consciousness of guilt that made them impatient of reproof. *They knew that their wives had burnt incense to other gods*, and that they had countenanced them in it, and the women that stood by knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous usages, so that what Jeremiah said touched them in a sore place, which made them kick against the pricks, as children of Belial, that will not bear the yoke.

2. The reply which these persons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himself, and it is in effect the same with theirs, who had the impudence to say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*.

(1.) They declare their resolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themselves had a mind to do; that is, they would go on to worship the moon, here called the queen of heaven; yet some understand it of the sun, which was much worshipped in Egypt, *chap. xlii. 13. and had been so at Jerusalem*, 2 Kings xxiii. 11. and they say, that the Hebrew word for the sun being feminine, it may not unfitly be called the queen of heaven: and others understand it of all the host of heaven, or the frame of heaven, the whole machine, *chap. vii. 18. These daring sinners do not now go about to make excuses for their refusal to obey, nor suggest that Jeremiah spoke from himself and not from God, as before, chap. xlii. 2. but they own he spake to them in the name of the Lord, and yet tell him flat and plain, in so many words, we will not hearken unto thee, we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatened. Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Here is the genuine language of the rebellious heart: We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said, many think, that yet have not arrived to such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at in the days of his youth, he would walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, Eccl. xi. 9.*

(2.) They give some sort of reasons for their resolution; for the most absurd and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when every mouth shall be stopped.

1. They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justify but magnify themselves with, and these here have as much right to them as they have. 1. They plead antiquity; we are resolved to burn incense to the queen of heaven, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prescription; and why should we pretend to be wiser than our fathers? 2. They plead authority; they that had power practised it themselves, and prescribed it to others; our kings and our princes did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David. 3. They plead unity; it was not here and there one that did it, but we, we all with one consent, we that are a great multitude, ver. 15. we did it. 4. They plead universality; it was not done here and there, but in the cities of Judah. 5. They plead visibility; it was not done in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but in the streets, openly and publicly. 6. They plead that it was the practice of the mother church, the holy see, it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in Jerusalem. 7. They plead prosperity: then had we plenty of bread, and of all good things, we were well, and saw no evil. All the rest I fear were too true in fact; God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Elijah thought he was left alone; and this last might perhaps be true as to some particular persons, but as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was no peace to them that went out or came in. 2. Chro. xv. 5. But supposing all to be true, yet this doth not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

2. They suggest, that the judgments they had of late been under, were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, ver. 18. So perversely did they misconstrue providence, though God, by his prophets, had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spoke the direct contrary! Since we forsook our idolatries, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword; the true reason of which was, because they still retained their idols in their heart, and an affection to their old sins; but they would have it thought, it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to part between them and their sins, being misinterpreted, did but confirm them in their sins. Thus in the first ages of Christianity, when God chastised the nations by any public calamities for opposing the Christians, and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians, and tolerating them, and cried, *Christianos ad leones*. Yet, if it had been true, as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they had been in want and trouble, was that a reason why they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say, they served not him but their own bellies: Those that know God, and put their trust in him, will serve him though he starve them, though he slay them, though they never see good days with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose by him in the end.

3. They plead, that though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands; the women were busy to make cakes for meat-offerings to the queen of heaven, and to prepare and pour out the drink-offerings, ver. 19. We found before it was their work, *chap. vii. 18. but did we do it without our husbands*, privately and unknown to them, so as to give them occasion to be jealous of us? No; the fathers kindled the fire, while the women kneaded the dough: the men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example. Note, It is sad when those that are in the nearest relation to each other, that should quicken each other to that which is good, and so help one another to heaven, harden each other in sin, and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands, ver. 15. who plead they did not do it without their men, i. e. without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but because the making of the cakes, and the pouring out of the drink-offerings, is expressly spoken of as the women's work, *chap. vii. 18. it seems rather to be understood as their plea*: But it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to say, that it was according to their husband's mind, when they knew it was contrary to their God's mind?

20 ¶ Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying, 21. The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind? 22. So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed: therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24. Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt: 25. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The LORD God loveth. 27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. 29. ¶ And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophrah king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life: as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that fought his life.

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word, and many a big word, but after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks; and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot: nay, here the prophet would not.

1. Jeremiah has something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake (a wilful mistake it was) concerning the communities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They said, these miseries came upon them because they had now *left off burning incense to the queen of heaven*; no, saith he, it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off. When they gave him that answer, he presently replied upon them, *ver. 20. that the incense which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods, did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering towards them, and during the day of his patience it was, perhaps, as they said, well with them, and they saw no evil*; but at length they grew so provoking, *that the Lord could no longer bear*, *ver. 22. but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform, their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins*: But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of *their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem*, which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in, as a justification of them in their idolatries, *they all came into his mind*, *ver. 21. all the abominations which they had committed*, *ver. 22. and all their disobedience to the voice of the Lord*, *ver. 23. all was brought to account, and therefore, to punish them for these, is their land a desolation and a curse, as at this day*, *ver. 22. therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old transgressions, is all this evil happened to them, as at this day*, *ver. 23.* Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far towards the cure of our sins: Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord, and should therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

2. Jeremiah hath something to say to them, to the women particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; they have given their answer, now let them hear God's reply, *ver. 24. Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt, hath God speaking to them, even there, that this is their privilege*; let them observe what he saith, that is their duty, *ver. 26.* Now God in his reply tells them plainly,

(1.) That since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in his controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said, *ver. 25. You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy, you have spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands, you have said it, and you stand to it, have said it, and go on to do accordingly, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it, were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it*; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to

himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. Well, saith God, *you will accomplish, you will perform your wicked vows*: Now hear what is my vow, *what I have sworn by my great name, and if the Lord hath sworn, he will not repent*, since they have sworn and will not repent; *with the sword he will shew himself forward*, *Psalm xviii. 26. He hath sworn, 1. That what little remains of religion there were among them should be lost*, *ver. 26.* Though they joined with the Egyptians in their idolatries, yet they continued upon many occasions to make mention of the name of Jehovah, particularly in their solemn oaths, they said, *Jehovah liveth, he is the living God*, so they owned him to be, though they worshipped dead idols; they swear, *The Lord liveth*, *Jer. v. 2.* but I fear they retained this form of swearing more in honour of their nation than of their God; but God saith, *his name shall no more be thus named by any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt*, i. e. there shall be no Jews remaining to use this dialect of their country, or if there be, they shall have forgotten it, and shall learn to swear, as the Egyptians do, *by the life of Pharaoh*, not of Jehovah. Note, Those are very miserable whom God hath so far left to themselves, as that they have quite forgot their religion, and lost all the remains of their good education. Or, this may intimate, that God would take it as an affront to him, and would resent it accordingly, if they did make mention of his name, and profess any relation to him. 2. He hath sworn, that what little remnant of people there was there, should all be consumed, *ver. 27. I will watch over them for evil, no opportunity shall be let slip to bring some judgment upon them, until there be an end of them, and they be quite rooted out.* Note, To those whom God finds impenitent sinners he will be found an implacable judge. And when it comes to this, they shall know, *ver. 28. whose words shall stand, mine or theirs.* They said, they should recover themselves, when they returned to worship the queen of heaven; God saith, they should ruin themselves; and now the event will shew which was in the right. The contest between God and sinners is, whose hand shall stand, whose will shall be done, who shall get the better: Sinners say, they shall have peace though they go on; God saith, they shall have no peace: But when God judgeth he will overcome; God's word shall stand, and not the sinner's.

(2.) He tells them, that a very few of them should escape the sword, and in process of time return into the land of Judah, a small number, *ver. 28.* next to none, in comparison with the great numbers that should return out of the land of the Chaldeans. This seems designed to upbraid those who boasted of their numbers that concurred in sin, there were none to speak of, that did not join in idolatry: well, saith God, and there shall be as few that shall escape the sword and famine.

(3.) He gives them a sign that all these threatenings shall be accomplished in their season, that they shall be consumed here in Egypt, and shall quite perish; Pharaoh-hophra, the present king of Egypt, shall be delivered into the hands of his enemies that seek his life; of his own rebellious subjects, to some, under Amasis, who usurped his throne; of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, to others, who invaded his kingdom: the former is related by Herodotus, the latter by Josephus. It is likely this Pharaoh had tempted the Jews to idolatry by promises of his favour: however, they depended upon him for his protection, and it would be more than a preface of their ruin, it would be a step towards it if he were gone. They expected more from him than from Zedekiah king of Judah, he was a more potent and politic prince; but saith God, *I will give him into the hands of his enemies, as I gave Zedekiah.* Note, Those creature comforts and confidences that we promise ourselves most from, may fail us as soon as those that we promise ourselves least from, for they are all what God makes them, not what we fancy them.

The sacred history records not the accomplishment of this prophecy, but its silence is sufficient; we hear no more of those Jews in Egypt, and therefore conclude them according to this prediction, lost there; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

C H A P. XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully, and keep close to him in difficult trying times. It is laid here after the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and probably those that follow. We here find, 1. How Baruch was frightened when he was brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll, *ver. 1-3.* 2. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations, and silenced with a promise of special preservation, *ver. 4, 5.* Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's scribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this provision made for his comfort: for God despiseth not any of his servants, but graciously concerns himself for the meanest and weakest, for Baruch the scribe, as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.

1. THE word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; 3. Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow, I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest, 4. ¶ Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, *chap. xxxvi.* and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to abscond, and how narrowly he escaped under a divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been subjoined, but that it having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to Philemon is put after his other epistles. Observe,

1. The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, *Woe is me now*, *ver. 3.* He was a young man setting out in the world, he was well affected to the things of God,

and was willing to serve God and his prophets, but when it came to suffering, he was desirous to be excused; being an ingenious man and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison or worse, was a great haulk to him. When he read the roll publicly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of and employed, but when he found that instead of that it exposed him to contempt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out I am undone, I shall fall into the pursuivants hands, and be imprisoned, and put to death or banished; *the Lord has added grief to my sorrow, i. e.* has loaded me with one trouble after another; after the grief of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal for so doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet for my part I cannot bear it, it is a burden too heavy for me; *I fainted in my sighing, or I am faint with my sighing*, it just kills me, and I find no rest, no satisfaction in my own mind, I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it, nor have I any prospect of relief or comfort. Baruch was a good man, but we must say, this was his infirmity. Note. 1. Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water sailors, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God: They do but *run with the footmen*, and it *wearieth them*; they faint upon the very dawning of the day of adversity, and it is an evidence that *their strength is small*, Prov. xxiv. 10. that their faith is weak, and they are yet but babes, that cry for every hurt and every fright. 2. Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions more than there is cause for. 3. God takes notice of the frets and discontents of his people, and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause and with such good company, but instead of that he vexeth at it and blames his lot; nay, and reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he said, was spoken in heat and passion, but God was offended at it, as Moses himself did, and paid dear for it too, when, his spirit being provoked, he *spoke unadvisedly with his lips*. Thou didst say so and so, and it was not well said; God keeps account what we say, even what we speak in haste.

2. The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such a toils, and knew not well what to say to him; he was loth to chide him, and yet thought he deserved it; was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he *shall say to him*, ver. 4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of these complaints and fears, but God sees it; they came from his corruptions; that therefore the hurt might not be healed slightly, he searcheth the wound, and shews him that he had raised his expectations too high in this world, and had promised himself too much from it, and that made this distress and trouble he was in so very grievous to him and so hard to be borne. Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do, if we did not foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-soundness for the good things of this present time, that makes us impatient under its evil things. Now God shews him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire, or to look for an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world: For, 1. The ship was sinking: ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin; *That which I have built*, to be a house for myself, *I am breaking down*; and *that which I have planted*, to be a vineyard for myself, *I am plucking up*, even this whole land, the Jewish church and state, and dost thou now *seek great things for thyself*? Dost thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? No. 2. It is absurd for thee to be now painting thine own cabin. Canst thou expect to be high, when all are brought low? To be full when all about thee are empty? To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves, when the public is in danger, is very unbecoming Israelites. We may apply it to this world, and our state in it; God in his providence is breaking down and pulling up, every thing is uncertain and perishing, we cannot expect any continuing city here: What folly is it then to *seek great things for ourselves* here where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

3. The encouragement that God gave him to hope, that though he should not be great, yet he should be safe; *I will bring evil upon all flesh*, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, *but thy life will I give to thee for a prey*, (thy soul, so the word is) *in all places whither thou goest*. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and wherever thou goest to be in danger, but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly, shall have thy life, but it shall be as a prey, which is got with much difficulty and danger; thou shalt be saved as by fire. Note, The preservation and continuance of life is a very great mercy, and we are bound to account it so, as it is the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at some times, especially when the arrows of death fly thick about us, it is a signal favour, and what we ought to be very thankful for, and while we have it must not complain, though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. *Is not the life more than meat?*

C H A P. XLVI.

How judgment began at the house of God, we have found in the foregoing prophecy and history, but now we shall find that it did not end there; in this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolations of the neighbour nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is here put first, and takes up this whole chapter; in which we have, 1. A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished presently in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, ver. 1—12. 2. A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 13—26. A word of comfort to the Israel of God in the midst of those calamities, ver. 27, 28.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet, against the Gentiles: 2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. 3. Order ye the buckler and shield and draw near to battle. 4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.

5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the LORD. 6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. 7. Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? 8. Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city, and the inhabitants thereof. 9. Come up, ye horses; and rage ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians, and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow. 10. For this is the day of the LORD God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the LORD God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north-country by the river Euphrates. 11. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured. 12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbour-nations, and follows here. It is *the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles*; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account that know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations, that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have *the word of the Lord against the Gentiles*, in the New Testament we have *the word of the Lord for the Gentiles*, that they who were *afar off* are made nigh.

He begins with Egypt because they were of old Israel's oppressor, and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretels the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was to complete a victory to the king of Babylon, that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and so weakened him that he came not again any more out of his land, as we find, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

1. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would: Come then, *order the buckler*, let the weapons of war be got ready, ver. 3. Egypt was famous for horses, let them be *harnessed*, and the cavalry well mounted; *get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth*, &c. ver. 4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expence, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves! He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile, ver. 7, 8. Egypt now *raiseth up like a flood*, seeming to keep within its own banks, and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands; it is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion, the prophet summons them, ver. 9. *Come up, ye horses, rage, ye chariots*: he challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, the Ethiopians, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians, Gen. x. 6. and were their neighbours and allies: the Libyans and Lydians, both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces: Let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain, they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding, for God will fight against them, and against him *there is no wisdom nor counsel*, Prov. xxi. 30, 31. It concerns them that go forth to war, not only to *order the buckler and harness the horses*, but to repent of their sins and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

2. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sat in heaven, and laughed at them, *but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor*, Mic. iv. 11, 12. Egypt saith, ver. 8. *I will go up, I will cover the earth*, and none shall hinder me; *I will destroy the city*, whatever city it is that stands in my way; like Pharaoh of old, *I will pursue, I will overtake*. Egypt saith, they shall have a day of it, but God saith, it shall be his day; *this is the day of the Lord God of hosts*, ver. 10. the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another, they designed it for the advancement of their dignity, and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abatement and weakening of their kingdom. It is a day of vengeance for Josiah's death; it is a day of sacrifice to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them and cutting them off.

3. They are upbraided with their cowardice and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement, ver. 5, 6. *Wherefore have I seen them*, notwithstanding all their mighty and vast preparations, and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faceth them, *dismayed, turned back*, quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them. 1. They make a shameful retreat, even their mighty ones, that one would think should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion, and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to look back, but fear is round about them, for they apprehend it so: and yet, 2. They cannot make their escape: they have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground and died upon the spot; for even the swift shall not flee away; The lightness of their heels shall fail them when

when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the mighty shall not escape, nay, they are *beaten down*, and broken to pieces; *They shall stumble* in their flight, and *fall towards the north*, towards their enemies' country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet, that instead of making homewards, as men usually do in that case, they made forwards. Note, *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. Valiant men are not always victorious.

4. They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, *ver. 11, 12*. The damsel, the daughter of Egypt, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for *balm in Gilead*, and physicians there; let her use all the medicines her wise men can prescribe, for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat: but all in vain, *no cure shall be to them*; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. The nations that rang of thy glory and strength, have now heard of thy shame, how shamefully thou wast routed, and how thou art weakened by it: It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it; *thy cry hath filled the country about*: For when they fled several ways, one mightily man fell upon another, and dashed against another, such confusion were they in! so that both together become a prey to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of them that were overcome. Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

13. ¶ The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph, and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee. 15. Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them. 16. He made many to fall, yea, one fall upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword. 17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed. 18. As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come. 19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant. 20. Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. 21. Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks: for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation. 22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. 23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. 25. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him: 26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD. 27. ¶ But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. 28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

In these verses we have,

1. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter, disabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? but still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them: Though the kings of Egypt came no more out of their land, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. yet they kept safe and easy in their land: and what would they desire more, than peaceably to enjoy their own? which one would think all men should be content to do, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; they that encroached on others, shall now be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to shew, how the king of Babylon should shortly come and smite the land of Egypt, and bring the war into their own bosoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, *ver. 13*. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadrezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and probably the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we had *chap. xliii. 10*.

(1.) Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amaze-

ment, *ver. 14*. notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, the sword is devouring round about in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly at Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees or fugitives rather had planted themselves, in contempt of God's command, *chap. xlii. 1*. and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

(2.) The retreat of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay hereupon, is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders and put to flight: Then were the valiant men swept away, *ver. 15*. as with a sweeping rain; it is the word that it used, *Prov. xxviii. 3*. they can none of them stand their ground, because the Lord driveth them from their respective posts; he drives them by his terrors, he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible those should fix whom the wrath of God chafeth. He it was, *ver. 16*. that made many to fall, yea, when their day is come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they shall fall one upon another, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God pleaseth, they shall be made to fall upon one another, every man's sword shall be against his fellow. Her hired men, the troops Egypt has in her service, are indeed in the midst of her like fatted bullocks, lusty men, able-bodied, and greatly spirited, that were likely for action, and to have made their part good against the enemy, but they are turned back, their hearts failed them, and instead of fighting they are fled away together: How could they withstand their fate, when the day of their calamity was come, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to fatted bullocks for their luxury; they had wanted in pleasures, so that they were very unfit for hardships, and therefore turned back and could not stand. In this confirmation, 1. They all made homewards towards their own country, *ver. 16*. They said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, where we may be safe from the oppressing sword of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it. In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops that fight purely for pay, and have no interest in their's whom they fight for. 2. They exclaimed mightily against Pharaoh, to whose cowardice or ill conduct, it is probable, their defeat was owing. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country, it is likely he told them, he would within such a time come himself with a gallant army of his own subjects to support them, but he failed them; and when the enemy advanced, they found they had none to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders; no marvel then that they quitted their post and deserted the service, crying out, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, *ver. 17*. he can Hector and bounce, and talk big, what mighty things he would do, but that is all, he brings nothing to pass; all his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke; he brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late; he hath passed the time appointed, did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note, Many times those that make much noise in any business, are but a noise. Great talkers are little doers.

(3.) The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described bearing down all before it. The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and before whom the mightiest kings on earth, though gods to us, are but as grasshoppers, he hath said it, he hath sworn it, As I live, saith this King, as Tabor overtops the mountains, and Carmel overlooks the sea, so shall the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt; such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear! *ver. 18*. He and his army shall come against Egypt with axes, as hewers of wood, *ver. 22*. and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them, than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to cut it down: So that Egypt shall be felled as a forest is by the hewers of wood, which, if they be many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose, will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a forest, the trees of which cannot be searched or numbered, and very rich, full of hid treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers; but they shall make a great spoil in the country, for they are more than the locusts, that come in large swarms and over-run a country, devouring every green thing, *Joel i. 6, 7*. so shall the Chaldeans do, for they are innumerable. Note, The Lord of hosts hath numberless hosts at his command.

(4.) The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. Egypt is now like a very fair heifer, or calf, *ver. 20*. fat and shining, and not accustomed to the yoke of subjection; wanton as an heifer that is well fed, and very sportful: Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to worship the golden calf: Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself, but destruction cometh; cutting up comes, to some read it; it comes out of the north; thence the Chaldean soldiers shall come, as so many butchers or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this fair heifer. 1. The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed: The daughters of Egypt shall be confounded, *ver. 24*. shall be filled with astonishment: their voice shall go like a serpent, i. e. it shall be very low and submissive, they shall not low like a fair heifer, that makes a great noise, but hiss out of their holes like serpents: They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now as they used to do answer roughly, but, with the poor, use intreaties, and beg for their lives. 2. They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemies land, *ver. 19*. O thou daughter dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful pleasant country, do not think this world will last always, but furnish thyself to go into captivity; instead of rich cloths, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm cloths; instead of fine shoes, provide strong ones; and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better. Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble; we provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor amongst all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee, for their cities shall be evacuated: Noph particularly shall be desolate without an inhabitant, so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be: There are some penalties which we say the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obnoxious; The multitude of No shall be punished: it is called populous No, *Neh. iii. 3*. Though hand join in hand, yet they shall not escape: nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they never so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall; and their gods too, *chap. xliii. 12, 13*. their idols and their great men. Those which they call their tutelary deities shall be no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and all those that trust in him, *ver. 25*. particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be delivered into the hands of the northern nations, *ver. 21*. into the hand not only of Nebuchad-

nezzar the mighty potentate, but *into the hands of his servants*, according to the curse of Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the *servants of servants*, these seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered.

(5.) An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again, *ver. 26. afterwards it shall be inhabited*, shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost dispeopled. Ezekiel foretels that this should be at the end of forty years, *Ezek. xxix. 13.* See what change the nations of the earth are subject to; how they are emptied and increased again, and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor those that for the present are under latches despair.

2. Here is the comfort and peace spoken to the Israel of God, *ver. 27, 28.* Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehohaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him; it may therefore rather refer to the captives of Babylon, whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally to all the people of God designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, *chap. xxx. 10, 11.* (1.) Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it: *but fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel;* and again, *Fear thou not, O Jacob.* God would not have his people to be a timorous people. (2.) The wicked of the earth shall be put away like dross, not to be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be found out and gathered, though they be far off, shall be redeemed, though they be held fast in captivity, and shall return. (3.) The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, *see when none pursues; but Jacob, being at home in God, shall be at rest, and at ease, and none shall make him afraid, for what time he is afraid, he has a God to trust to.* (4.) The wicked, God beholds afar off: but wherever thou art, *O Jacob, I am with thee, a very present help.* (5.) A full end shall be made of the nations that oppress God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon, but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God; they shall be corrected, but not cast off, the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods, the Jewish nation itself is come to an end, as a nation; but the gospel church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that though God correct it, he will never make a full end of it.

C H A P. XLVII.

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians their's; and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadnezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in shivers with them in the destruction here threatened. 1. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowns should come upon them, to their great terror, ver. 1—5. 2. That the war should continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it should be in vain, ver. 6, 7.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza. 2. Thus saith the LORD: Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. 3. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of the strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands; 4. Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor; 5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off, with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself? 6. O thou sword of the LORD, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. 7. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbours to them. They were pretty well humbled in David's time, but it seems they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with other their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is observable; it was before Pharaoh smote Gaza: when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt, is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return from thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterwards came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here to shew, that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines, when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adversary or evil occurrence, when no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities, yet then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginnings of sorrow to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them; *Waters rise up out of the north*, *ver. 2.* Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations. *Rev. xvii. 15.* sometimes great and threatening calamities, *Psal. lxi. 1.* these here signify both; they rise out of the north, whence fair weather useth to come, and the wind that drives away rain, but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would be soon overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a mighty fright and consternation upon it; the men shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children, *all the inhabitants of the land shall howl*, so that nothing but lamenta-

tion shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, *ver. 3.* before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy maketh his approach, shall strike a terror upon the people to that degree, that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, for they shall not look back to their children, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their hands shall be so feeble that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot: or they shall be in such a consternation that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be overfond of their children, nor dote upon them, since such distress may come, as that they may either wish they had none, or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the country of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them, *ver. 4.* Note, Those whom God will spoil, must needs be spoiled, for if God be against them, who can be for them? Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait, but now they shall themselves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every helper that remains. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures, will find it cut off, when they most need it, and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the remnant of the country of Caphtor were is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines, *Gen. x. 14.* and probably when their own country was destroyed, such as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, *Gaza and Ashkelon*, *ver. 5.* baldness is come upon them, the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief; and they are cut off, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valleys shall be spoiled, and made a prey of by the conquerors.

4. That those calamities should continue long. The prophet in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness asks him first, *ver. 5. How long wilt ye cut yourselves?* as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do: O how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting: but he turns from the effect to the cause, they cut themselves, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, (1.) He bespeaks that to be still, *ver. 6. O thou sword of the Lord, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet?* He begs it would put up itself into the scabbard, would devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresseth the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion, as became a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword. Note, War is the sword of the Lord, with it he punisheth the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun it often lasts long; the sword once drawn doth not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; nay some when they draw the sword, will throw away the scabbard, for they delight in war. So deplorable are the desolations of war, that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that swords might be beaten into ploughshares! (2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and stops the mouth of his own complaint, *ver. 7. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against such and such places, particularly specified in its commission? there hath he appointed it.* Note, 1. That the sword of war hath its charge from the Lord of hosts: every bullet hath so, you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God; the war itself was so: he saith to it, *Go, and it goes; come, and it comes; do this, and it doth it;* for he is commander in chief. 2. When the sword is drawn, we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword shall accomplish that for which he sends them.

C H A P. XLVIII.

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God had constituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment, we had the predictions, *Isa. xv. and xvi. and the like*, *Amos ii. 1.* and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians under Salmanassar invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolations of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accomplished under Nebuzar-adan, about five years after he had destroyed Jerusalem. Here is, (1.) The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general, should extend itself to all parts of the country, *ver. 1—6—8.* and again, *ver. 21—25—34.* That spoilers should come upon them, and force some to flee, *ver. 9.* should carry many into captivity, *ver. 12—16.* that the enemy should come shortly, *ver. 16.* come swiftly and surprise them, *ver. 40, 41.* that he should make thorough work, *ver. 10.* and lay the country quite waste, though it was very strong, *ver. 14, 15.* that there should be no escaping, *ver. 42—45.* that this should force them to quit their idols, *ver. 13—35.* and put an end to all their joy, *ver. 33, 34.* their neighbours shall lament them, *ver. 17—19.* as the prophet himself doth, *ver. 31—36.* &c. (2.) The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride and security, and carnal confidence, *ver. 7—11—14—29.* and their contempt of, and enmity to God and his people, *ver. 26, 27—30.* (3.) A promise of the restoration of Moab, *ver. 47.*

1. **A** Gainst Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed. 2. There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee. 3. A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction. 4. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. 5. For in the going up of Lubith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction. 6. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. 7. ¶ For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together. 8. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and

and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken. 9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein. 10. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. 11. ¶ Moab hath been at ease from his youth; and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed, 12. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles. 13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The author of Moab's destruction; it is the Lord of hosts that has armies, all armies at his command, and the God of Israel, ver. 1. who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that has always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, though Israel was forbidden to meddle with them, Deut. ii. 9. therefore the destruction of Moab is called the work of the Lord, ver. 10, for it is he that pleads for Israel: and his work will exactly agree with his word, ver. 8.

2. The instruments of it. Spoilers shall come, ver. 8. shall come with a sword, a sword that shall pursue them, ver. 2. I will send unto him wanderers, such as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall cause him to wander; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they have devised evil against Heshbon, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom, Come, and let us cut it off from being a nation, ver. 2. nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders, they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engageth them to make thorough work of it, ver. 10. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, this bloody work, this destroying work, though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is the work of the Lord, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret insinuation, (saith Mr. Gataker) to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not out of foolish pity keep back their sword from blood, they would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites; and Ahab by letting Benhadad go: Thy life shall go for his life. To this work is applied that general rule given to all that are employed in any service for God, Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully or negligently, that pretends to do it, but doth it not to purpose, makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes; or that is slothful in business for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, Mal. i. 14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

3. The woeful instances and effects of this destruction: The cities shall be laid in ruin, they shall be spoiled, ver. 1. and cut down, ver. 2. they shall be desolate, ver. 9. without any to dwell therein: there shall be no houses to dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. Every city shall be spoiled, and no city shall escape. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the valley shall perish, and the plain be destroyed, ver. 8. The corn and the flocks that used to cover the plains and make the valley rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, and carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape, the priests and princes shall go together into captivity. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who they expect should protect them, shall share with them in the ruin, his temples shall be laid in ashes, and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of all this will be, (1.) Great shame and confusion; Kirjathaim is confounded, and Misgah is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities: there shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon; so it might be read, ver. 2. there shall be no more brag of the strength of that city, when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. Nor shall they any more boast of their gods, ver. 13. they shall be ashamed of Chemosh, ashamed of all the prayers they made to, and all the confidence they put in that dunghill deity; as Israel was ashamed of Bethel, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians; nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Those that will not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woeful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service. (2.) There will be great sorrow; there is a voice of crying heard, ver. 3. and the cry is nothing but spoiling and great destruction; alas! alas! Moab is destroyed, ver. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the little ones have caused a cry to be heard, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up the hills, go down to the valley, and you meet with continual weeping, weeping with weeping, all are in tears, you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it: but it is so great it cannot be hid. (3.) There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, Away, away, flee, save your lives, ver. 6. shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the heath or grig or dry shrub in the wilderness; think not of carrying away any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, Matt. xxiv. 16; 17, 18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly, and therefore give wings unto Moab, ver. 9. that would be the greatest kindness you could do them, that is it that they will call for, O that we had wings like a dove! for unless they had wings and could fly, there will be no escaping.

4. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them.

(1.) It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, in their works, and in their treasures, ver. 7. They had taken

a great deal of pains to fortify their cities, and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers; so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be, and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance; they trusted in the abundance of their riches, and strengthened themselves in their wickedness, Psal. lxxv. 7. Now for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that shall master their works and rife their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature, which we repose that confidence in that should be reposed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon.

(2.) It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and prosperity, ver. 11. 1. They had been long undisturbed: Moab had been at ease from his youth. It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and hath enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country, and surrounded with potent neighbours: God's Israel was afflicted from their youth, Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2. but Moab at ease from his youth; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled, nor any way made unenly; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel hath often done, and yet is Moab a wicked idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones; Psal. lxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that persist in unrepented iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, 2. They had been as long corrupt and unreformed: He hath settled on his lees; he hath been secure and sensual in his prosperity, hath rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees; his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore they fear not God, their hearts and lives are unchanged, Psal. lv. 19.

14. ¶ How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war? 15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. 16. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast. 17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name; say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod! 18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong-holds. 19. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth; and say, What is done? 20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled, 21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath, 22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim, 23. And upon Kirjathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon, 24. And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD. 26. ¶ Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. 27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou speakest of him, thou skippedst for joy. 28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the files of the hole's mouth. 29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. 30. I know his wrath, saith the LORD; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it. 31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. 32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee, with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits and upon thy vintage. 33. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fall from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting. 34. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice from Zoar even unto Horonaim; as an heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate. 35. Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods. 36. Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished. 37. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. 38. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD. 39. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down!

down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him. 40. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth is taken, and the strong-holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD. 44. He that fleeth from the fear, shall fall into the pit: and he that getteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even unto Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. 45. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. 46. Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth; for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives. 47. ¶ Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely, and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and very pathetically and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences; and with the power of God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God, and of his wrath, than to enquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here used.

1. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden, that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves strong for war, and able to deal with the most powerful enemy, ver. 14. and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the affliction hastens fast, ver. 16. and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall fly as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly shall he come, ver. 40. as an eagle flies upon his prey, and he shall spread his wings, the wings of his army over Moab; he shall surround it that none may escape. The strong-holds of Moab are taken by surprise, ver. 41. so that all their strength stood them in no stead; and this made the hearts even of their mighty men to fail, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be afraid of sudden fear.

2. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins. Moab is spoiled, ver. 15. quite spoiled, is confounded and broken down, ver. 20. their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy, so that they are forced to quit them, ver. 15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment is come, and the list concludes with an &c. &c. &c.; what need he mention more particulars, when it comes upon all the cities of Moab in general, far and near, ver. 21—24. Note, When iniquity is universal, we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority, the horn of Moab is cut off; of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive, his arm is broken, that he can neither give a blow, nor save a blow, ver. 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, ver. 15. they went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious, but God told them they went down to the slaughter; so sure are they to fall, against whom God fights! in a word, Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, ver. 42. Those that are enemies to God's people, will soon be made no people.

3. It is a lamentable destruction, it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

(1.) The prophet that foretells it doth himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures, and concern for the human nature: The prophet will himself howl for Moab, his very heart shall mourn for them, ver. 31. he will weep for the vine of Sibmah, ver. 32. his heart shall sound like pipes for Moab, ver. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pain to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab, Isa. xv. and xvi. for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

(2.) The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in glory, in the midst of wealth and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall sit in thirst, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, ver. 15. It is time to sit in thirst, and inure themselves to hardship, when the spoiler is come, that will strip them of all and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one that escapeth, What is done? ver. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will howl and cry, in bitterness and anguish of spirit, ver. 20. they will abandon themselves to solitude, to lament the desolations of their country, they will leave the cities that used to be full of mirth, and dwell in the rock, where they may have their fill of melancholy: They shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, like the dove, ver. 28. the doves of the valleys, Ezek. vii. 16. Those that give up themselves to mirth, let them know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme, that they shall make themselves bald, and cut themselves, ver. 37. which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers, Job indeed rent his mantle, and shaved his head, but he did

not cut himself. When the flood of passion riseth never so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal, ver. 38. There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves, and in all the streets, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and fears, and in propagating them; for they shall see all lost; I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, which shall not be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in, was their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines: The delights of sense were all the matter of their joy: Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make all their mirth to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, are gone over the sea, ver. 32. are carried into other countries to be planted there. The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage, and that is it that makes the cry of Heshbon to reach even to Elealeh, ver. 34. Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab, ver. 33. If the wine fail from the wine-presses, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off: Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting. Note, Those who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since those are things they may easily be deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they that rejoice in God, may do that even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate, ver. 34. and therefore their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all places like the howling of a heifer of three years old. The expressions here are borrowed from Isa. xv. 5, 6.

(3.) All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole their ruin, ver. 17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him. Let him have that alloy to his grief, let him see himself pitied by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance that do but know his name, and have heard of his fame, take notice of his fall, and say, How is the strong staff broken; whose strength was the terror of its enemies! and the beautiful rod whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction: Let none be puffed up with, or put confidence in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

4. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt. Moab is made drunk, ver. 26. and he that is made drunk is made vile, he shall wallow in his vomit, and become an odious spectacle, and shall justly be in derision. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath, till they stagger and fall, and be brought to their wit's end, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again, ver. 39. Moab shall be a derision, and a dismaying to all about him, they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, They that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

5. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them; not only of their summer-fruits, and their vintage, but of their wealth, ver. 36. The riches that he hath gotten are perished, though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest, is as liable to perishing, as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things, and like dust as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst neither, even those whose religion was false and foolish, were fond of it above any thing, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening, ver. 35. that God will cause to cease him that offered in the high places, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste; and the priests themselves that burn incense to their gods, shall be slain or carried into captivity, ver. 7. Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

6. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved and brought upon themselves by sin.

(1.) The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, ver. 29. We have all heard of the pride of Moab, his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, he is exceeding proud, and grows worse and worse: Observe his loftiness, his arrogance, his pride, his haughtiness; and multiplying of words to the same purpose, intimates, in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man: It was charged upon them, Isa. xvi. 6. but here it is expressed more largely than there: Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction which pride is the forerunner of. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab; 1. He had carried it insolently towards God. He must be brought down with shame, ver. 26. for he hath magnified himself against the Lord; and again, ver. 42. he shall be destroyed from being a people, for this very reason; the Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance. 3. He had carried it scornfully towards Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a derision to him, ver. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolations of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them as if they had been thieves taken in the act of robbing; as often as they spoke of them they skipped for joy. Many, in such a case, entertain in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress, and laughing at him; which was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress, will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of God's church, shall not long go unpunished.

(2.) Besides this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, ver. 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, saith God, I know his wrath, I know it comes from the old enmity he hath to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God: I know he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation: He now tells the Chaldeans what ill people the Jews are, and irritates them against them, but it shall not be so as he expects: his lies shall not

so effect it; The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself. Some read it, *I know his rage, is it not so?* (Is he not very furious against the people of Go?) And his lies I know also, *Do they not do so?* Do they not belie them? Note, All the fury and all the falsehood from the church's enemies is perfectly known to God, whatever the pretences are with which they think to cover it, *Iſa. xxxvii. 28.*

7. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment shall perish by another; *Fear, and the pit, and the snare shall be upon them, ver. 43.* There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it, when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction, nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general, *Iſa. xxiv. 17, 18.* that they who flee from the fear, shall fall into the pit; and they who come up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare; is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab, *ver. 44.* for it is the year of their visitation, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executeth, for he is the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, *ver. 15.* he is not only the King, that has authority to give judgment, but he is the Lord of hosts, that is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used, *ver. 44.* are explained in one instance, *ver. 45.* Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themselves under the shadow of Heshbon, stood there, and supposed they stood safe, as now armies sometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they should be disappointed, for when they flee out of the pit, they fall into the snare; Heshbon, which they thought would have sheltered them, devours them, as Moses had foretold long since, *Numb. xxi. 21.* A fire is gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon, and devours those that came from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones, or of the revellers or children of noise; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men, that bluster and hector and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? we have it, *ver. 46.* Woe be to thee, O Moab, thou art undone: the people that worship Chemosh perisheth, and is gone; farewell Moab: The sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in.

8. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days: God that brings them into captivity, will bring again their captivity, *ver. 47.* Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wrath. When Israel returned, Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. Yet it looks further to gospel times; the Jews themselves refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends, it ends comfortably, *Thus far is the judgment of Moab.*

C H A P. XLIX.

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it, according to the instructions given to Jeremiah, chap. xxv. 15. This chapter puts it into the hands, 1. Of the Ammonites, *ver. 1-6.* 2. Of the Edomites, *ver. 7-22.* 3. Of the Syrians, *ver. 23-27.* 4. Of the Kedarites, and the kingdoms of Hazor, *ver. 28-33.* 5. Of the Elamites, *ver. 34-39.* When Israel was scarcely saved, where shall all these appear?

I. CONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? 2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD; that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD. 3. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. 4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? 5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the LORD God of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth. 6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

The Ammonites were next both in kindred and neighbourhood to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar: Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, and was but an ill neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions.

(1.) An action is here brought in God's name against the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad that lay next them, *ver. 1.* A writ of enquiry is brought to discover what title they had to those territories, which upon the carrying away of the Gileadites, by the king of Assyria, (2 Kings xv. 29, 1 Chron. v. 26.) were left almost dispeopled, at least unguarded and an easy prey to the next invader. What! Doth it escheat *ob defectum sanguinis?* Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Are there no Gadites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah; that is nearer akin to them than you are? Why then doth their king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Malcom, their idol, as if he had the disposal of it to his worshippers, inherit Gad, and his people dwell in the cities which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people? Nay, they were sons and heirs of their own body, *en ventre sa mere*, and the Ammonites, to prevent their claim, most barbarously murdered them, *Amos*

i. 13. They ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border; that, having seized it, none might rise up, hereafter to recover it from them: Thus they magnified themselves against their border, and boasted it was their own, *Zeph. ii. 8.* Note, Though among men, might often prevails against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne judging right; and those will find themselves mistaken, who think every thing their own that they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to: As there is justice owing to owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, whom it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not the right, or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

(2.) Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

1. Terrors shall come upon them. God will cause an alarm of war to be heard, even in Rabbah, their capital city, and a very strong one, *ver. 2.* The Lord God of hosts, that has all armies at his command, will bring a fear upon them from all that be about them, *ver. 5.* Note, God has many ways to terrify those that have been a terror to his people.

2. The cities shall be laid in ruins. Rabbah, the mother city, shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters, the other cities shall have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire: so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they have; and not knowing whither to betake themselves.

3. Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted, *ver. 4.* Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, and trustest in thy treasures, O backsliding daughter? they are charged with backsliding or turning away from God, and from his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never been so in covenant with God as Israel was, yet all idolaters may be called backsliders, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. They were untoward and refractory, so some read it: And when they had forsaken their God, they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things. These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains that they were inaccessible: gloried in the products of them, gloried in the treasures they got together out of them, saying, Who shall come unto me? While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them; to-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgments at defiance; they are proud, voluptuous and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so? Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God, have little reason, either to take a complacency, or to put a confidence in any worldly enjoyments whatever, *Hos. ix. 1.*

4. Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country; some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated. Their king and his princes, nay, and Malcom, their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity, *ver. 3.* and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight, *ver. 5.* forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fail them. And to complete their misery, none shall gather up him that wandereth, none shall open their doors to them, as Jael to Sisera, to entertain them; and those that flee shall be so much in care to secure themselves, that they shall not take notice of others, no, not of those that are nearest to them, that wander, and are at a loss which way to go, as *chap. xlvii. 3.*

5. That the country of the Ammonites shall fall into the hands of the remaining Israelites, *ver. 3.* Then shall Israel be heir to them that were his heirs, shall possess himself of their land, who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprisal. Note, The equity of divine providence is to be acknowledged, when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust pains of the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for a while, the tables will shortly be turned.

(3.) Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter, *ver. 6.* as before to Moab: The day will come when the captivity of the children of Ammon will be brought again; for so it is in human affairs, the wheel goes round.

7. ¶ Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? 8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. 9. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. 10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren and his neighbours, and he is not. 11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. 12. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup, have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shalt altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. 13. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, and Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. 14. I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. 15. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. 16. Thy terrible-ness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. 17. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. 18.

As

As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. 19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 20. Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom, and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. 21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall: at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea. 22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah: They also were old enemies to the Israel of God, but their day will come to be reckoned with; and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but to comfort the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity. *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom, are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions.

Now here it is foretold,

1. That the country of Edom should be all wasted, and made desolate, that the calamity of *Ejau* should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, *ver. 8.* The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account, and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves: all they have shall be carried off by the conqueror; whereas grape-gatherers will leave some gleanings, and even thieves know when they have enough, and will destroy no farther, they that destroy them shall never be satiated, *ver. 9, 10.* they shall make *Ejau* quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden treasure, shall discover even the secret places where they thought to secure their wealth, and rifle them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room: *He shall not be able to hide himself, and his seed too is spoiled: His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, whom he might have expected succours from, or at least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service: And he is not, or there is not he, there is none to him, none left him that may say what follows, ver. 11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive.* When they are flying or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish officers to take care of the wives and children that they leave behind. Edom is not, he is cut off and gone, nor is there any to say, *Leave me thine orphans.* If the master of a family be cut off or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity; and they read it, *But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans, I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word:* Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to the people of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and though they cannot promise themselves great things in the world for them, yet they may hope that he may preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other but to be made a desolation and a reproach, for the decree is gone forth, God hath sworn it by himself, *ver. 12.* that their cities shall be wasted, nay, they shall be perpetual wastes, they shall be made mean and despicable; they had made a mighty figure, but God will make them small among the heathen, and they that despised God's people, shall themselves be despised among men, *ver. 15. Obad. 2.* nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a prodigy, *ver. 17. Edom shall be such a desolation, that every one that goes by shall be astonished:* Nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror, Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrah, none shall care for coming near the ruins of it, *no man shall abide there, ver. 18.* such a frightful place shall it be made!

2. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service, *ver. 14. I have heard a rumour, or report, from the Lord, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, heard it by a whisper to myself, that an ambassador, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, that are to lay Edom waste, saying, Gather ye together, muster all the forces ye can, and come against her; for, ver. 23. that is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom: the matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no retreating it; God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly.* Nebuchadnezzar is he, of whom it is here foretold, 1. That he shall come up like a lion, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which force him out of his covert by the water-side into the higher grounds, *ver. 19.* He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way: He shall come against the habitation of the strong, the forts and castles; and I will cause him to come suddenly into the land, so the next words might well be read, so as to find them unprovided with necessities for a defence; for I will look out a chosen man to appoint over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people; for when God has work to do, he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it: And in this, *Who is like me* for choosing the instruments and spitting them for the work? and, *Who will appoint me the time?* i. e. who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, *Who is that shepherd,* that can or dare stand before me or against me, to oppose that lion, and think to rescue any of the flock? Note, When God has work to do of any kind, he will soon find those that are able to engage

in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion, to do it, even the least of the flock shall draw them out, *ver. 20.* The meanest servant in Nebuchadnezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall draw them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and make their habitations desolate with them. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, all hands shall be employed, and the poorest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. 2. Nebuchadnezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds, *ver. 22. He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey, so swiftly so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, so secure it for himself, as before, chap. xlviii. 40. and immediately the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them, for they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain struggle with.*

3. That the Edomites confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. 1. They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, *ver. 7.* That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics; and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their councils, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites; *Is wisdom no more in Teman?* Are the wise men of the east country (*1 Kings iv. 30.*) become fools? Are those at their wits ends, that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? *Is counsel perished from the understanding men?* It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy, he infatuates. See *Job xii. 20. Is their wisdom vanished? Is it tired? Is it worn out? Is it worn out? Is it become useless? Is it tired?* Yes, it will do them no service when God comes forth to contend with them. 2. They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, *ver. 16.* They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them, and truckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves, and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbour nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terrible blindness of their's deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibleness; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. As high as they are, God will bring them down; for as there is no wisdom, so there is no might against the Lord. See these expressions, *Obad. 3, 4, 8.*

4. That their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. 1. God hath determined it, *ver. 12.* he hath said it; nay, *ver. 12.* he hath sworn it, that the Edomites shall not go unpunished; but they shall drink the cup of trembling, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours; even they, whose judgment or doom, was not to drink of the cup, i. e. that had not so well deserved it as they had done, nations that had not been such enemies to Israel as they had been; or, Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, that kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption, and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup, and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall surely drink of it. Note, When God punisheth the less guilty, it is folly for the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. 2. All the world shall take notice of it, *ver. 21. The earth is moved, and all the nations put into a concern, at the noise of their fall;* the news of it shall make them tremble. The noise of the outcry is heard to the Red sea, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom: So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors, and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nations, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea to take in lading, (*Kings ix. 26.*) and they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shores. Note, Those that have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, their fall, when it comes, will make so much the greater noise.

23. ¶ Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings, they are faint-hearted, there is sorrow on the sea, it cannot be quiet. 24. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her as a woman in travail. 25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy? 26. Therefore her young men shall fall in the streets, and all the men of war shall be off cut in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. 27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that, yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, *ver. 23. and the palaces of Ben-hadad,* which he built, are particularly marked for ruin, *ver. 27.* as also, *Amos i. 9.* Some think Ben-hadad (the son of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgment of Damascus.

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faint-heartedness. They hear evil tidings, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and they are confounded, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, they are faint-hearted, they have no spirit left them, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet, *Isa. lvii. 26.* or like men in a storm at sea, *Psal. cvii. 26.* of the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, *ver. 23.* See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour! Damascus now waxeth feeble, *ver. 24.* a city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now turns herself to flee, and owns it is to no more purpose to think of contending with her fate, than for a woman in labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a city of praise, *ver. 25.* not praise to God, but to herself; a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a city of joy, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the sons of men, and abundance of mirth in the enjoyment of them. We read it (though it needs not) the city of my joy, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure: Or, it may be the speech of the king

king lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, Those deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God in his providence can soon cast a damp upon them, and put an end to them. He can soon make a city of praise to be a reproach, and a city of joy to be a terror to itself.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. 1. The inhabitants are slain, ver. 26. The young men that should fight the enemy and defend the city, shall fall by the sword in her streets, and all the men of war, mighty men, expert in war, and engaged in the service of their country, shall be cut off. 2. The city is laid in ashes, ver. 27. The fire is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the palaces of Ben-hadad particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now visited.

28. ¶ Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. 29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side. 30. ¶ Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. 31. Arise, get you up into the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone. 32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners: and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the stony, and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who perhaps were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but being driven thence settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarens. Concerning this people we may here observe,

1. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in tents, and had no walls, but curtains, ver. 29. no fortified cities; they had neither gates nor bars, ver. 31. They were shepherds, and had no treasures but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels: They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they dwelt alone, ver. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them, nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the products and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, 1. They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a wealthy nation, ver. 31. because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich that have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people, they may be found among shepherds that dwell in tents. 2. They were very easy, they dwelt without care, their wealth was such as no body envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably and enjoy the like, and therefore they fear nobody. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly, may live very securely, though they have neither gates nor bars.

2. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and the descent he made upon them: He hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you, ver. 30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said, that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered that dwell in tents. It was strange that eagle would stoop to catch these fies; that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious covetous man's net. Note, It will not always secure men from suffering wrong, to be able to say they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadrezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived inoffensively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was to punish them for their offences against him, that God said, ver. 28. Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world, to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God saith to the Chaldeans, ver. 31. Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwells without care; go, and give them an alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved.

2. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made upon them: They shall cry unto them, i. e. those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, Fear is on every side, we are surrounded by the enemy; the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet, and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall proclaim fear upon them, or against them, on every side; they need not strike a stroke, they shall shout them out of their tents, ver. 29. Upon the first alarm they shall flee, get far off, and dwell deep, ver. 30. as the Edomites, ver. 8. And it will be found that this fear on every side is not groundless, for their calamity shall be brought from all sides thereof, ver. 32. No marvel there are fears on every side, where there are foes on every side. The issue will be, 1. What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans; they shall take to themselves their curtains and vessels; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite, and spoil for spoiling sake: They shall carry away their tents and their flocks, ver. 29. Their camels shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, ver. 32. 2. It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance, and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom for their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed though now they dwell in the utmost corners, out of the way, and therefore

they think out of the reach of danger; by this character those people were distinguished, chap. ix. 26. and xxv. 23. yet they shall from thence be scattered into all winds, into all parts of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity is not always a protection and security: Many that affect to be strangers to the world, may yet by unthought-of providences be forced into it; and those that live most retired, may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth, and lie most exposed. 3. Their country shall lie uninhabited; for, lying remote, and out of all high roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that Hazor shall be a desolation for ever, ver. 33. If busy men be displaced, many strive to get into their places, because they lived great; but here are easy quiet men displaced, and no man cares to abide where they did, because they lived mean.

34. ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, 35. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. 36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. 37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: 38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD. 39. ¶ But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable, the other prophecies, against the Gentiles, going before, were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam the son of Shem, Gen. x. 22 yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews, which was called Elymais, and adjoined to Media: Elam, had acted against God's Israel, bare the quiver in an expedition against them, Isa. xlii. 6. and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will bring evil upon them, even his fierce anger, and that is evil enough, it has all evil in it, ver. 37. In particular,

1. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered incapable to do them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, ver. 35. will ruin their artillery, and then the chief of their might is gone. God often orders it so, that that which we most trust to, first fails us; and that which was the chief of our might, proves the least of our help.

2. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captive into their respective countries, while others shall flee, some one way, and some another, to shift for themselves, so that there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come, ver. 36. The four winds shall be brought upon them; the storm shall come sometimes from one point, and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways; and we know not from what point the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries, they shall be dismayed before their enemies; but, as if that were not enough, I will find the sword after them, ver. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them. Evil pursues sinners.

3. The princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed, ver. 38. I will set my throne in Elam. The throne of Nebuchadrezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elymais. Or, it may be meant of the throne on which God sits for judgment; he will make them know that he reigns, that he judgeth in the earth, and that kings and princes are accountable to him, and that, as high as they are, he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, Gen. xiv. 1. Chedorlaomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successors, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man: When God sets his throne in Elam, he will destroy from thence the king and the princes that are, and set up whom he pleaseth.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual, ver. 39. In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam. When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, brought the empire into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those, who, when the Holy Ghost, was given, heard spoken in their own tongues the wonderful works of God, Acts ii. 9. and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. If the Son make you free, then you shall be free indeed.

C H A P. L.

In this chapter and that which follows we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last accomplished; and when the cup of God's fury went round, chap. xxv. 17. the king of Shechach, i. e. Babylon, drank last, Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastening of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again when it is come to its height by Jeremiah; for though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing like a green bay-tree, yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and in the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ; so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at apocalyptic triumphs of the gospel church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being bor-

ruined from hence. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the other, and therefore the prophet is very large upon this subject for the comfort of the captives; and what was foretold in general often before, chap. xxv. 12. and xxvii. 7. is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well as light. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the glorious blessings he had in store for his people that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for therefore Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is, 1. The ruin of Babylon, ver. 1—3. and again, ver. 9—16. and again, ver. 21—32. and again, ver. 35—46. 2. The redemption of God's people, ver. 4—8. and again, ver. 17—20. and again, ver. 33, 34. And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to say which one would choose to take one's lot with, the persecuting Babylonians, that, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a ruin; or the persecuted Israelites, that, though now in thralldom, are reserved for so great a glory.

1. **T**HE word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. 2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. 3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. 4. ¶ In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. 5. They shall ask their way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. 6. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place. 7. All that found them have devoured them, and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. 8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

Here is, 1. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose works all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretell the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are our friends, if notwithstanding they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

(1.) The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done, ver. 2. Let it be published to the nations as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it, *Babylon is taken*; let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not conceal it. Take care that it be known, that the Lord may be known by those judgments which he executeth, Psal. ix. 16.

(2.) It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly. For, 1. The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities, they shall be confounded, and the images of them broken in pieces. 2. The country shall be laid waste, ver. 3. out of the north; from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come that shall make her land desolate. Their land was north to the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north (*conne malum ab aquilone*) but God will find out nations yet farther north to come upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome were brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

2. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both the children of Israel and of Judah; for many there were of the ten tribes that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

(1.) It is promised, that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, ver. 4, 5. 1. They shall lament after the Lord, as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 Sam. vii. 2. they shall go weeping. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; they are tears of repentance for sin, tears of joy for the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for aught appears, doth more towards the bringing of them to mourn for sin, than all the calamities of their captivity; that prevails to lead them to repentance, when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy, when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand. 2. They shall enquire after the Lord, they shall not sink under their sorrows, but bestir themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God. Those that seek the Lord must seek him sorrowing, as Christ's parents sought him, Luke ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, for he will be found of those that so seek him. They shall seek the Lord as their God, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are confounded and broken, it will be seasonable for them to enquire after their own God, and return to him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. 3.

They shall think of returning to their own country again, shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the holy hill of Zion, on which once stood the house of the Lord their God, ver. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward: Zion was the city of their solemnities, they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity, Psal. cxxxvii. 1. but now the ruin of Babylon gave them some hopes of a release, they talk of nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they set their faces thitherward; they long to be there, they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short: the journey is long, they know not the road, but they shall ask the way, for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in care not to miss the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God: heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, towards this they have set their faces, and therefore ask the way thither. Not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces towards the world; nor set their faces towards heaven, and go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there is both a sincere desire to attain the end, and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is, to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces thitherward. 4. They shall renew their covenant with God of closer walking for the future; Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to join themselves to him again, by engaging themselves afresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must do their first works, must renew the covenant they first made; and it must be a perpetual covenant that must never be broken; and in order to that must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

(2.) Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; My people (for he owns them as his now they are returning to him) hath been lost sheep, ver. 6. they have gone from mountain to hill, have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture; they have forgotten their resting-place in their own country, and cannot find their way to it. And that which aggravated their misery was, 1. That they were led astray by their own shepherds, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so provoked God to turn them out of their own land. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct and reform them, seduce and debauch them; and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. 2. That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as waifs and strays that have no owner, ver. 7. it is with them as with wandering sheep, all that found them have devoured them, and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries they laughed at them; telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved: that was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they bantered them with this excuse, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, but they could not pretend they had sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as the habitation of justice, and the hope of their fathers; they had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justify their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had forsaken the habitation of justice, and him that was the hope of their fathers.

(3.) They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was open to them, ver. 8. Remove, not only out of the borders, but out of the midst of Babylon; though you be never so well seated there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and be as the he-goats before the flocks, i. e. strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work: a he-goat is therefore comely in going, Prov. xxx. 31, because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9. ¶ For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north-country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. 10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD. 11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoice, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; 12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13. Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. 14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD. 15. Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. 16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land. 17. ¶ Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. 18. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. 19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead. 20. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD

LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be fought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

God is here by his prophet, afterwards in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

1. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon: the army that is to do it is called an *assembly of great nations*, ver. 9. the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an *assembly*, because regularly formed by the divine will and counsel to do this execution: God will *raise them up* to do it, will incline them to and fit them for this service, and then he will *cause them to come up*, for all their motions are under his conduct and direction: he shall give the word of command, shall order them to *put themselves in array against Babylon*, ver. 14. and then *they shall put themselves in array*, ver. 9. for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and from thence presently *she shall be taken*, from their first sitting down before it they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them *shoot at her, and spare no arrows*, ver. 14. and then *their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man*, that has both skill and strength, a good eye and a good hand, ver. 9. *None shall return in vain*. When God gives commission he will give success. Nay, they are bidden not only to *shoot at her*, ver. 14. but to *shoot against her*, ver. 15. with a triumphant shout, as those that are already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to *shoot*, may do it with *shouting*, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

2. The desolation and destruction itself that shall be brought upon Babylon: This is set forth here in a great variety of expressions, (1.) The wealth of Babylon shall be a rich and easy prey to the conquerors, ver. 10. *Chaldea shall be a spoil* to all her destroyers, who shall enrich themselves by plundering her, and, which is strange, *all that spoil her shall be satisfied*; they shall have so much, that even they themselves shall say they have enough. (2.) The country of Babylon shall be dispeopled and lie uninhabited; *it shall be wholly desolate*, ver. 13. to that degree, that *every one that goeth by shall triumph in her fall*, and, instead of condoling them shall *lift up all her plagues*, ver. 13. (3.) Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset, ver. 12. or *your mother*, i. e. Babylon itself, the mother city, *shall be confounded*, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. Thus the first ages of Christians may justly be confounded and ashamed, to see how unlike them the latter ages are, and how wretchedly they have degenerated; and no sin brings a surer and sorer ruin upon person or people than apostacy. (4.) The great admirers of Babylon shall see it rendered very despicable: the last of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations *shall it be, a wilderness, a dry land, a desert*, ver. 12. The country that was populous shall be dispeopled, that was enriched with a fertile soil shall become barren. (5.) The great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined, *her foundations are fallen*, and therefore *her walls are thrown down*, for how can the walls stand, when divine vengeance is at the door, and shakes the very foundation? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. (6.) There shall not be left in Babylon so much as *the poor of the land for vine-dressers and husbandmen*, as there was in Israel; ver. 16. *The tower shall be cut off from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle*; the country shall be so emptied of people, that there shall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; seed-time shall come, but there shall be no sowers; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do their's. (7.) All their auxiliary forces, which they have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenary men often do upon the approach of danger, ver. 16. *for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people*. This was threatened before concerning Egypt, chap. xlii. 16.

3. The procuring, provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure: it is *because of the wrath of the Lord* that Babylon shall be *wholly desolate*, ver. 13. and his wrath is righteous, for, ver. 14. *She hath sinned against the Lord*, therefore *spare no arrows*. Note, It is sin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. A great deal of idolatry and immorality were to be found in Babylon, yet these are not mentioned as the reason of God's displeasure against them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been *the destroyers of God's heritage*, ver. 11. herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction. (1.) What they did against Jerusalem they did with pleasure, ver. 11. *ye were glad, ye rejoiced*. God doth not afflict his people willingly, and therefore takes it very ill if the instruments he employs afflict them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it. (2.) The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of to feed their own luxury; *Ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls*: your having conquered Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, easy to yourselves and formidable to all about you, and therefore you must be a *spoil*. They that have thus swallowed down riches must vomit them up again. Therefore they have *given their hand*, ver. 15. i. e. they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, so that now you may *take vengeance on her*, now you may make reprisals, and *do unto her as she hath done*. (3.) They aimed at nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel; *Israel is a scattered sheep*, as before, ver. 6. that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him and *driven him away*, ver. 17. One king of Assyria carried the ten tribes quite away and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it, tore the fleece and flesh of this poor sheep; and now at last this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him and *broken his bones*, has quite ruined him, has unboned him, and therefore the king of Babylon must be punished as the king of Assyria was, ver. 18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors, must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

4. The mercy promised to the *Israel of God*, which shall not only accompany, but accrue from the destruction of Babylon. (1.) God will return their captivity, they shall be released out of their bondage, and *brought again to their own habitation*, as sheep that were scattered to their own fold, ver. 19. They still retained a title to the land of Canaan, it is their habitation still, the discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right, but now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again. (2.) He will restore their prosperity; they shall not only live, but live comfortably in their own land again: they shall *feed upon Carmel and Bashan*, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country: These sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with, though they shall

come hungry to it, having been so long stinted and straitened and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satiate them, and shall have hearts to be satiated with it. They *enquired the way to Zion*, ver. 5. where God was to be served and worshipped, that was it they chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, They that return to God and their duty, shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and they that *seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, that aim to make their habitation in Zion, the holy hill, *other things shall be added to them*, even all the comforts of *Ephraim and Gilead*, the fruitful hills. (3.) God will pardon their iniquity; this is the root of all the rest, ver. 20. *In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be fought for, and there shall be none*. Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before him as if it had never been, it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind his back; nay, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer sealed up among God's treasures, nor in any danger of appearing again, or rising up against them. This notes how fully God forgives sin, he *remembers it no more*. Note, Deliverances out of trouble are then comforts indeed, when they are the fruits of forgiveness of sin, *Iju. xxxviii. 17*. Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon, that they are said to have *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*, Isa. xl. 2. this may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols or any idolatrous customs among them after their return, *there shall be none*, they *shall not find them*; their dross shall be surely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so; for *I will pardon them whom I reserve, I will be propitious to them*, so the word is; and that must be through him who is the *Great Propitiator*. Note, Those whose sins God pardons, he reserves for something very great; for whom he *justifies*, them he *glorifies*.

21. ¶ Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee. 22. A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. 23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! 24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD. 25. The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the LORD God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. 26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her store-houses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. 27. Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter; woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation. 28. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple. 29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel. 30. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD. 31. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the LORD God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. 32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up; And I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Here, 1. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and every thing got ready for a descent upon that potent kingdom. *Go up against that land by Merathaim*, i. e. the country of the Mardi, that lay part in Assyria, and part in Armenia, and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country, mentioned Ezek. xxiii. 23. which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon: The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, ver. 21. *to come against her from the utmost border*: Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, ver. 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; the archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, ver. 29. Thus the Lord hath opened his armoury, ver. 25. *his treasury*, so the word is; and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: as great princes fetch out of their magazines and stores all necessary provisions for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury, thence he fetcheth the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus, and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He hath variety of instruments, hath them at command, hath armouries ready to be opened according as the occasion is. *This is the work of the Lord God of hosts*. Note, When God hath work to do, he will make it appear that he is, *God of hosts*, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, *Do according to all that I have commanded thee*, ver. 21. It was laid of Cyrus, *Iju. xlii. 28*. *He shall perform all my pleasure*, in his expedition against Babylon. They must *waste and utterly destroy after them*; when they have destroyed once they must go over them again; or destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must *open their store-houses*; ver. 26. *rifle her treasures*, and turn her artillery against herself; they must *cast her up as heaps*; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish: *Tread her down as heaps*, so the margin reads it; and *destroy her*

her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value, and value themselves by! Their princes and great men, that are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand, *ver. 27. Slay all her bullocks; all her mighty men, let them go down suddenly and insensibly, as an ox to the slaughter: Woe unto them, the case is the more sad, for the little sense they have of it; their day is come to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.*

3. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, *ver. 22. Babylon shall become a desolation, ver. 23. her young men and all the men of war, shall be cut off in that day,* that should have been her defence, *ver. 30. God is against her, ver. 31. he hath laid a snare for her, ver. 24. he hath formed this enterprise against her,* that she should be surprised as a bird taken in a snare. Cyrus shall, no doubt, prevail, for he fights under God; God will kindle a fire in the cities of Babylon, *ver. 32. and who can stand before him when he is angry? or quench the fire that he has kindled?*

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be that are called to such work. 1. Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious and injurious to all its neighbours; *it has been the hammer of the whole earth, ver. 25. beating, beating down, and beating to pieces all the nation: far and near. It has done so long enough, it is time now that it be cut asunder and broken.* Note, He that is the God of nations will sooner or later assert the injured right of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break the hammer of the whole earth. 2. Babylon has bid defiance to God himself: *Thou hast striven against the Lord, ver. 21. hast joined issue with him,* (so the word signifies) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him, therefore *thou art now found and caught, as in a snare.* Note, Those that strive against the Lord, will soon find themselves over-matched. 3. Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple, *ver. 28. The burning of the temple, and carrying away the vessels of that, was an article in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid, than upon its being the hammer of the whole earth; for Zion was the joy and glory of the whole earth.* Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church, his temple in the world, it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer and heavier than the vengeance of the temple. 5. Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall, for it is the glory of God to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them, *Job xl. 12. I am against thee, O thou most proud, ver. 31. Thou pride, so the word is; and again, ver. 32. as proud as pride itself.* Note, The pride of men's hearts sets God against them, and ripens them apace for ruin; for God resists the proud, and will bring them down: *The most proud shall stumble and fall; they shall fall not so much by others thrusting them down, as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high, that they never look under their feet; to choose their way and avoid stumbling-blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel, ver. 29. has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him her enemy, and therefore when she is fallen none shall raise her up, ver. 32. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?*

33. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast, they refused to let them go. 34. Their redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon: 35. ¶ A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. 36. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. 37. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. 38. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. 39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein; and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. 40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. 41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 42. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not shew mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. 43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them and his hands waxed feeble: anguish told hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail. 44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan, unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her! for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand

before him? 45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon: and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. 46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

We have in these verses,

1. Israel's suffering, and their deliverance out of those sufferings: God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt, he hath surely seen it, and has heard their cry. *Israel and Judah were oppressed together, ver. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and mingled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were oppressed together. They were humble supplicants for their liberty, and that was all; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for all that took them captives held them fast, and were quite too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that though they are weak, their redeemer is strong, ver. 34. their avenger, so the word signifies; that has a right to them, and will claim his right and make good his claim; he is stronger than their enemies that hold them fast; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people though they are very weak. The Lord of hosts is his name, and he will answer his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God, that though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of hosts for them; and he shall thoroughly plead their cause, pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it and carry it, that he may give rest to the land, to his peoples land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers, that complain of the dominion of sin and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities, let them know that their redeemer is strong, he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause, sin shall not have dominion over them; he will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; he will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God.*

2. Babylon's sin, and his punishment for that sin.

(1.) The sins they are here charged with are idolatry and persecution. 1. They oppressed the people of God, they held them fast, and would not let them go; they opened not the house of his prisoners, *Isa. xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh, it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. Therefore the inhabitants of Babylon must be disquieted, ver. 34. because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, as well as rest to them that are troubled, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. 2. They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others which is due to him alone; for, ver. 38. it is the land of graven images, all parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them, and in all this they were wretchedly insatuated, and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in the idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols properly signifies terrors, *Euim*, the name given to giants that are formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children: The idols were scarecrows; yet they doted on them. Babylon was the mother of harlots, *Rev. xviii. 5. the scourge of idolatry.* Note, It is the maddest thing in the world to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be mad upon idols that cannot profit: But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.*

(2.) The judgments of God upon them for these sins, and such as will quite lay them waste and ruin them.

1. All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about, but now they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even upon the inhabitants of Babylon, *ver. 35. a sword of war; and as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, 1. Upon their princes, they shall fall by it, and their dignity, wealth and power shall not secure them. 2. Upon their wise men, their philosophers, their statesmen and privy-counsellors; their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves, nor stand the public in any stead. 3. Upon their soothsayers and astrologers here called the liars, ver. 36. for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity; the sword upon them shall make them dote, so they shall talk like fools, and be as the men that had lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. 4. Upon their mighty men, a sword shall be upon their spirits: and if they are not slain yet they shall be dismayed, and shall be no longer mighty men; for what stead will their hands stand them in when their hearts fail them? 5. Upon their militia, ver. 37. the sword shall be upon their horses and chariots, the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize their horses and chariots for themselves, or destroy them. The troops of other nations that were in their service shall be quite disheartened, the mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women. 6. Upon their exchequer, the sword shall be upon her treasures, which are the sinews of war, and they shall be robbed, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission!*

2. The country shall be made desolate, *ver. 38. the waters shall be dried up; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought to be by that river inaccessible. The water likewise that makes the country fruitful should be dried up, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by the wild beasts of the desert, ver. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, *Isa. xlii. 19—22. It shall become like Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 40. The same was foretold concerning Edom, chap. xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.**

3. The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies invading of them, *ver. 41, 42, 43. All the expressions here used speaking the formidable power of the invaders, the terrors wherewith they should array themselves, and the mighty fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, chap. vi. 22, 23, 24. concerning the Chaldeans invading the land of*

Judah,

Judah. The battle which is there said to be *against thee, O daughter of Zion*, is here said to be *against thee, O daughter of Babylon*, to intimate that they should be paid in their own coin. Those that are for terror and destruction to others, God can find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to them. And those who have dealt cruelly and have shewed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages, there it is said, *we have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble*, &c. here it is said, *the king of Babylon has heard the report, and his hands waxed feeble*; which intimates, that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

4. That they shall be as ill hurt as frightened, for the invader shall come up like a lion to tear and destroy, ver. 44. and shall make them and their habitation desolate, ver. 45. and the desolation shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, ver. 46. These three verses we had before, chap. xlix, 19, 20, 21. in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished upon the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to shew that though the distributions of providence may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will be equal at last: when thou shalt make an end to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1: Rev. xiii. 10.

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The prophet in this chapter goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bear witness. He is very large and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives, whose deliverance depended upon it, and was to be the result of it. Here is, 1. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given from thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her, ver. 1—58. 2. The representation and ratification of this, by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates, ver. 59—94.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD: Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; 2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. 3. Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigantine; and spare ye not her young men, destroy ye utterly all her host. 4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets. 5. For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. 6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. 7. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad. 8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed; howl for her, take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. 9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. 10. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God. 11. Make bright the arrows; gather the shields; the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple. 12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes; for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness. 14. The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee. 15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. 16. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 17. Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. 18. They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 19. The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance:

VOL. II. No. CXXIX*.

The LORD of hosts is his name. 20. Thou art my battle-ax and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; 21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider: and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; 22. With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman: and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; 23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. 24. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD. 25. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyeth all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. 26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD. 27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Achenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. 28. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. 30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holes: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burnt their dwelling places; her bars are broken. 31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, 32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. 33. For thus saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. 34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. 35. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say: and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. 36. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. 38. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lion's whelps. 39. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, saith the LORD. 40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats. 41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! 42. The sea is come up upon Babylon, she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. 43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. 44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up, and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him, yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. 45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land: a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. 47. Therefore behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon, and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. 48. Then the heaven, and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sink for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD. 49. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall: so at

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Babylon

Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. 50. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still; remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. 51. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house. 52. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images, and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 53. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. 54. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: 55. Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: 56. Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken; for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite. 57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wife men, her captains and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. 58. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned so often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavour to collect them under their proper heads.

Let us then observe here,

1. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the use that God in his providence had made of it, *ver. 7. Babylon hath been a golden cup, a rich and glorious empire, a golden city, Isa. xiv. 4. a head of gold, Dan. ii. 38. filled with all good things, as a cup with wine; nay, she had been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings, he had made the earth drunk with this cup; some were intoxicated with her pleasures, and debauched by her; others intoxicated with her terrors, and destroyed by her: And, in both senses, the New Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, Rev. xvii. 4. and xviii. 4. Babylon had also been God's battle-ax, it was so at this time when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, ver. 20. The forces of Babylon were God's weapons of war, tools in his hand with which he broke in pieces, and knocked down nations and kingdoms, horses and chariots, which are so much the strength of kingdoms, ver. 21. man and woman, young and old, with which kingdoms are replenished, ver. 22. the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, ver. 23: Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as instruments of his wrath for the chastising of the nations; and yet now Babylon herself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while, yet will at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall, the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.*

2. A just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God. 1. They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedness, *ver. 9. We would have Babylon healed, but she is not healed.* The people of God that were captives among them, endeavoured according to the instructions given them, *Jer. x. 11. to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it, still they doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore they resolve to quit them and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring they had done their best to save her from ruin, but it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and it is in vain to withstand it, or think to avert it.* 2. They are complained of for their inveterate malice against Israel; other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, *ver. 34, 35. The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough to ruin me, he has emptied me of all that was valuable, hath swallowed me up as a dragon or whale swallows up the little fish by shoals, he hath filled his belly, filled his treasures with my delicacies, with all my pleasant things, and hath cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this: Zion and Jerusalem shall say, Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my own flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, be upon them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hands. Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.*

3. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He sits on the throne judging right, is ready to receive complaints and answers, *ver. 36. I will plead thy cause, leave it with me, I will in due time plead it effectually, and take vengeance for thee, and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest: Israel and Judah seem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, ver. 5. It is true, their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel, they were a provoking people, and their sins were a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them, and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, Israel is not forsaken, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hosts; God is his God still, and will act for him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it doth not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, Psalm lxxxix. 30, 32. The Chaldeans*

thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel, but there is a time fixed for vengeance, *ver. 6. We cannot expect it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he will render unto Babylon a recompence, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouseth their cause, it is the vengeance of his temple, ver. 11. as before, chap. i. 28. The Lord God of recompences, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely requite, ver. 56. will pay them home; he will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion, ver. 21. he will return it in the sight of his people, they shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy; they shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion; any man may see it, and say, Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth: for just as Babylon hath cursed the slain of Israel to fall, has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without distinction, even all the land, almost all were put to the sword, so at Babylon shall fall, not only the slain of the city, but of all the country, ver. 49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for what they did against his people; but Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it, ver. 10. The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness, he has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has righted us; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us, and that we are yet in his eyes a righteous nation. Let it therefore be spoken of to his praise, Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God, that others may be invited to join with us in praising him.*

4. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouseth Zion's cause, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy, *ver. 14. It is the Lord of hosts that hath said it, and hath sworn it, he hath sworn it by himself, for he could swear by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will fill it with men as with caterpillars, that shall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to lift up a shout against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all the inhabitants, and make them an easy prey to this numerous army. But who, and where is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders, Jer. x. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated to shew that God will convince those by his judgments that would not be convinced by his word, that he is God over all. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon is able to make his words good, for, 1. He is the God that made the world, ver. 15, and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built. 2. He has the command of all the creatures that he has made, ver. 16. his providence is a continued creation; he hath wind and rain at his dispose; if he speak the word, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and it is a wonder how they hang there, fed by vapours out of the earth; and it is a wonder how they ascend thence: Lightnings and rain seem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we know not whence it comes, yet we are sure is brought out of his treasures. 3. The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word as a mere sham, and their worshippers brutish people, ver. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are the work of errors; when they come to be visited, i. e. to be examined and enquired into, they perish, i. e. their reputation sinks, and they appear to be nothing; and those that make them are like unto them; but between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison, ver. 19. The portion of Jacob is not like them; the God who speaks this, and will do it, is the former of all things, and the Lord of all hosts, and therefore can do what he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is their portion and they are his, they put a confidence in him as their portion, and he is pleased to take a complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the lot of his inheritance; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates, both the certainty and importance of them, and obligeth us to take special notice of them; God hath spoken once: yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God; power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus speak once, yea, twice, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it and receive it.*

5. A description of the instruments that are to be employed in this service. God hath raised up the Spirit of the kings of the Medes, *ver. 11. Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for God's device is against Babylon to destroy it, they do it, but God devised it, he designed it, they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. These whom God employs against Babylon, are compared, ver. 1. to a destroying wind, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth, or by its fierceness blows down all before it; this wind is brought out of God's treasures, ver. 16. and it is here said to be raised up against them that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans, those of other nations that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for them that contest with him. The enemies are compared to fanners, ver. 2. who shall drive them away, as chaff is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been farmers to winnow God's people, chap. xv. 7. and to empty them, and now they shall themselves be in like manner despoiled and dispersed.*

6. An ample commission given them to destroy, and lay all waste. Let them bend their bow against the archers of the Chaldeans, *ver. 3. and not spare her young men, but utterly destroy them, for the Lord hath both devised and done what he spake against Babylon, ver. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, by assuring them of success; the methods they take are such as God has devised, and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he hath spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made; this they are called to, ver. 27, 28. Let a standard be set up, under which to lift soldiers for this expedition; let a trumpet be blown to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat and Minni, and Ashkenaz of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and of Ascania, about Phrygia and Bithynia, send in their quota of men for his service: Let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in great numbers, as the caterpillars, and come like them leaping and pawing in the valley: Let them lay the country waste as caterpillars do, Joel ii. 4. especially rough caterpillars: Let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great, and there is occasion for many hands to be employed in it.*

7. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against

against this threatening destroying force. When God employed them against other nations, they had spirit and strength to act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now it comes to their turn to be reckoned with, all their might and courage is gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically and in an upbraiding way, *ver. 11. Make bright the arrows, which are grown rusty through disuse; gather the shields, that in a long time of peace and security have been scattered and thrown out of the way, ver. 12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed funt and service to that mother city, now to come in to her assistance: Let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the centinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates, that they would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened; and they were so to that degree, that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken; but that all their preparations should be to no purpose; who will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, ver. 29. The whole land shall tremble, and sorrow, a universal consternation shall seize upon them, for they shall see both the irresistible arm and the irreversible counsel and decree of God against them; they shall see that God is making Babylon a desolation, and therein is performing what he hath purposed; and then the mighty men of Babylon hush forborne to fight, ver. 30. God having taken away their strength and spirit, so that they have remained in their holds, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails, they become as timorous as women, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, burnt her dwelling-places, and broken her bars. It is to the same purpose, ver. 56, 57, 58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, that should make head against him, are presently taken their weapons of war fail them, every one of their bows is broken, and stands them in no stead; their politics fail them, they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, that sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk, they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair, they can form no right notions of things, stagger and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another, and, like drunken men, fall out among themselves; and at length sleep a perpetual sleep, and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them in a fatal lethargy. The walls of their city fail them, ver. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet sure, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are the broad walls of Babylon, or as the margin reads it, the walls of broad Babylon; the compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and 50 cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them: Some say, there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like about the outer; and the stones of the wall being laid in pitch instead of mortar, Gen. xi. 3. were scarce separable; and yet these shall be utterly broken, and the high gates and towers shall be burnt and the people that are employed in the defence of the city shall labour in vain, in the fire, they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.*

8. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders, 1. It is a certain destruction, the doom is past, and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted, *ver. 8. Babylon is fallen and destroyed*, is as sure to fail, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon, *ver. 25. Behold, I am against thee*, and those cannot stand long whom God is against; he will stretch out his hand upon it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of or withstand the force of. It is his purpose which shall be performed, that Babylon must be a desolation, *ver. 29.* 2. It is a righteous destruction; Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For, *ver. 25. Babylon has been a destroying mountain*, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and destroying all the earth, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be rolled down from its rocks, which were as the foundations on which it stood; it shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken: It is now a burning mountain, like Atna and the other volcanos, that throw out fire to the terror of all about them; but it shall be a burnt mountain, it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes; so will this world be at the end of time. Again, *ver. 33. Babylon is like a threshing-floor*, in which the people of God have long been threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time is come that she shall herself be threshed, and her sheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared, Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war; and her people, like corn at harvest, are ripe for destruction, *Rev. xiv. 15. Mic. iv. 12.* 3. It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well fenced and fortified against it, she dwells upon many waters, *ver. 13.* the situation of her country is such, as that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed by rivers. In allusion to this, the New Testament Babylon is said to sit upon many waters, i. e. to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, *Rev. xvii. 15. Babylon is abundant in treasures*, and yet *thine end is come*, and neither thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee. The end that comes shall be the measure of thy covetousness, i. e. it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which otherwise had been boundless. God, by the destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no further.* Note, If men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud, but she will be deceived, *ver. 33. Though Babylon should mount her walls and palaces up to heaven*, and though (because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to fortify the height of her strength, yet all will not do, God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength, and bring down her height. 4. It is a gradual destruction, which if they had pleased, they might have foreseen, and had warning of for, *ver. 46. A rumour will come one year, that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that in another year shall come a rumour; that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way; so that when he was a great way off, they might have sent and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure to do that, and their hearts were hardened to this destruction.* 5. Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction. *Babylon is suddenly fallen, ver. 15.* the destruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Testament Babylon in one hour, *Rev. xviii. 17.* The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; so that they who were posted near the place, sent

one messenger, one courier after another with advice of it, *ver. 31.* The fool-puffs shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his city is taken at one end, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy hath seized the passes, *ver. 32.* the forts or blockades upon the river; and having got over the river, they set fire to the reeds on the river-side, to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted, and have thrown down their arms and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witness, by the enemies being in the palace and slaying the king himself, *Dan. v. 30.* And that profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when the city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security, and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to, *ver. 38, 39. They shall roar together like lions, as men in their revels used to do, when the wine is got into their heads; they call it singing, but in scripture language, and in the language of sober men, it is called yelling like lions whelps.* It is likely they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas; well, faith God, in their heat, when they are inflamed (*Isa. v. 11.*) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will make their feasts, I will give them their portion, they have passed their cup round, now the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them, *Hab. iii. 15, 16.* a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk, that they may rejoice, or rather that they may reel it, and sleep a perpetual sleep; let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep, never to wake more, as, *ver. 57. for on that night, in the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain.* 6. It is to be an universal destruction, God will make thorough work of it, for as he will perform what he hath purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans, multitudes shall be thrust through in her streets, *ver. 4.* They are brought down like lambs to the slaughter, *ver. 40.* in such great numbers, so easily; and the enemies make no more of killing them, than the butcher doth of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading of them, is here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters, *ver. 42. The sea is come up upon Babylon*, which, when it has once broke through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the multitude of its waves, overpowered by a numerous army: Her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited, uncultivated desert, *ver. 43.* 7. It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that the whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall, and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan. I will do judgment upon her graven images, *ver. 47.* and again, *ver. 52.* All must needs perish, if their gods perish from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themselves idolaters, yet they shall destroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earnest of the abolishing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worshipped, and therefore that is by name here marked for destruction, *ver. 44. I will punish Bel*, that great devourer, that image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered, and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort; he shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, *Job xx. 16.* His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, shall fall and fail them. 8. It shall be a final destruction. You may take balm for her pain, but in vain, she that would not be healed by the word of God, shall not be healed by his providence, *ver. 8, 9. Babylon shall become heaps, ver. 37.* and, to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and attended with ill omens! *ver. 26. They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations.* People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it notes, that there shall be nothing left in Babylon, on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again, for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate for ever. St. Jerome faith, that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's walls were to be seen, yet the ground inclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts.

9. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom when ruin is approaching to quit the city, and retire into the country, *ver. 6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon*, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity. When God's judgments are abroad, it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are levelled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Christ gave his disciples, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, *Let them which be in Judaea flee to the mountains, Matt. xxiv. 16.* It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her tears, *ver. 45, 46. Lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land.* Though God had told them that Cyrus should be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also, that in the peace thereof they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress those fears; for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation, should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all: it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, *ver. 50, 51. Ye Israelites that have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans your oppressors, and of the Persians their destroyers, now the year of release is come, Go away, stand not still, hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably seated in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is.* (1.) He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return; remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil, his presence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it. Note, Wherever we are in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is reasonable to remember the Lord. And let Jerusalem come into your mind, though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust, *Palm cii. 14.* though few of you ever saw it, yet believe the report you have had concerning it, from those that wept when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither. Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind. And it will be of great use to us in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often in our mind. (2.) He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under, *ver. 51.* being minded of Jerusalem they cry out, *We are confounded, we cannot bear the thought of it, shame covers our faces* at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that it is profaned and ruined

ruined by strangers; how can we think of it with any pleasure? To which he answers, ver. 52. that the God of Israel will now triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins.

10. Here is the different resentment of Babylon's fall, and it is the same we have of the *New Testament Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 9—19.

(1.) Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. There is the sound of a cry, a great outcry coming from Babylon, ver. 54. lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord hath destroyed the voice of the multitude, that great voice, of mirth, which used to be heard in Babylon, ver. 55. We are told what they shall say in their lamentations, ver. 41. *How is Shephach taken?* and how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised and become an astonishment among the nations that was the praise, and glory, and admiration of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt, which has been universally cried up!

(2.) Yet some shall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow-creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives; upon these accounts *the heaven and the earth, and all that is in both shall sing for Babylon*, ver. 48. the church in heaven and the church on earth shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

59. ¶ The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah, the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince. 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. 61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; 62. Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63. And it shall be when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: 64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon, in this and the foregoing chapter, now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here, ver. 60. *Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon.* He received this notice that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating and to the perpetuating of the word of God, to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on or ambassador for king Zedekiah, in the fourth year of his reign, ver. 59. He went with Zedekiah, or as the margin reads it, *on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon.* The character given of him is observable, that this Seraiah was a quiet prince, a prince of rest; he was in honour and power, but not as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties and heading factions, and driving things furiously, but was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling: he was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man; Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely intrust such a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that were already gone into captivity: *When thou shalt come to Babylon and shalt see what a magnificent a place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shall therefore be tempted to think, sure it will stand for ever; as the disciples when they observed the buildings of the temple, concluded nothing would throw them down but the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 23. then thou shalt read all these words to thyself and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity; let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith.*

4. He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read, ver. 62. *Then thou shalt look up to God and say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place to cut it off.* This is like the angel's protestation, Rev. xix. 9. concerning the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, *These are the true sayings of God.* And Rev. xxi. 6. *These words are true and faithful.* Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, having read this prophecy, he must foresee Babylon falling; and by virtue of it must curse its habitation, though it be taking root, Job v. 3. *O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing.* Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. *Thou hast spoken against this place to cut it off, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp, nor fear its power; when we see what this world is, how glittering its shews are, and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the Book of the Lord that its fashion passeth away, and it shall shortly be cut off, and be desolate for ever, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt.* Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him, whose word it is, an humble believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity, and goodness of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, *Thus shall Babylon sink and not rise, for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burden, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off or get from under, ver. 63, 64.* In the sign it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swam, but in the thing signified it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon

in this prophecy that sunk that city, which seemed as firm as a stone. The fall of the New Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more magnificent, Rev. xviii. 21. *A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall.* Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book: *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah; not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah, ver. 59. long before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies, because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, chap. xli. 1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and as some think, was added by some other hand.*

C H A P. LII.

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore for the better understanding the prophecies of this book, which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that sad event. It is much the same with the history we had 2 Kings xxiv. and xxv. and many of the particulars we had before in that book, but the matter is here repeated and put together to give light in the book of the Lamentations, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. That article in the close concerning the advancement of Jehoiachin in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives colour to their conjecture, who suppose that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himself, but by some man divinely inspired among those in captivity, for a constant memorandum to those who in Babylon preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy. In this chapter we have, (1.) The ill reign of Zedekiah, very ill in regard both of sin and punishment, ver. 1—3. (2.) The besieging and taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, ver. 4—7. (3.) The severe usage which Zedekiah and the princes met with, ver. 8—11. (4.) The destruction of the temple and the city, ver. 12—14. (5.) The captivity of the people, ver. 15, 16. and the numbers of those that were carried into captivity, ver. 28—30. (6.) The carrying off of the plunder of the temple, ver. 17—23. (7.) The slaughter of the priests, and some other great men in cold blood, ver. 24—27. (8.) The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to see in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadrezzar, ver. 31—34.

1. **Z**EDEKIAH was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hammutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4. ¶ And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about;) and they went by the way of the plain. 8. ¶ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and all his army was scattered from him. 9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the other in the first year of Jeconiah; but probably it was drawn up by some of those that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themselves for imagining that they should not go into captivity after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themselves, We have here,

1. God's just displeasure against Judah and Jerusalem for their sin, ver. 3. His anger was against them to that degree, that he determined to cast them out from his presence, his favourable gracious presence, as a father when he is extremely angry with an undutiful son, bids him get out of his presence. He expelled them from that good land that had such tokens of his presence in providential bounty, and that holy city and temple that had such tokens of his presence in covenant-grace and love. Note, Those that are banished from God's ordinances, have reason to complain that they are in some degree cast out of his presence: yet none are cast out from God's gracious presence, but those that by sin have first thrown themselves out of it. The fruit of sin we should therefore depreciate above any thing, as David, Psal. li. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.*

2. Zedekiah's ill conduct and management, to which God left him in displeasure against the people, and for which God punished him in displeasure against him. Zedekiah was arrived to years of discretion when he came to the throne, he was twenty-one years old, ver. 1. he was none of the worst of the kings, we never read of his idolatries, yet his character is, that he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, for he did not do the good he should have done. But that ill deed of his which did in a special manner hasten this destruction, was his rebelling against the king of Babylon, which was both

both his sin and his folly, and brought ruin upon his people; not only meritoriously but efficiently: God was greatly displeased with him for his perfidious dealings with the king of Babylon, as we find, *Ezek. xvii. 15. &c.* and because he was angry at Judah and Jerusalem, he put him into the hand of his own counsels, to do that foolish thing which proved fatal to him and his kingdom.

3. The possession which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jerusalem after eighteen months siege. They sat down before it, and blocked it up in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, *ver. 4.* and made themselves masters of it in the *eleventh year, in the fourth month, ver. 6.* In remembrance of these two steps towards their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept *a fast in the fourth month, and a fast in the tenth, Zech. viii. 19.* that in the *fifth month* was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the *seventh* of the murder of Gedaliah. We may easily imagine, or rather cannot imagine, what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this year and a half that it was besieged, when all provisions were cut off from coming to them, and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy, and being obstinately resolved to hold out to the last extremity, nothing remained but a *certain fearful looking for of judgment.* That which disabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was the *famine in the city, ver. 6.* there was *no bread for the people of the land,* so that the soldiers could not make good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable; and then no wonder that *the city was broken up, ver. 7.* Walls, in such case, will not hold out long without men, no more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city *by night, ver. 7.* and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves; but the king was overtaken by the pursuers in the plains of Jericho, and his guards dispersed, and all his army scattered from him, *ver. 8.* his fright was not causeless, for where there is guilt, there will be fear in time of danger. But his fright was fruitless, for there is no escaping the judgments of God, they will *come upon the sinner,* and will *overtake him,* let him flee where he will, *Deut. xxviii. 15.* and these judgments particularly that are here executed, were there threatened, *ver. 52, 53, &c.*

5. The sad doom past upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, *gave judgment upon him, ver. 9.* One cannot think of it without the utmost vexation and regret, that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king: But he *humbled not himself before Jeremiah* the prophet, therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the haughty conqueror, *his sons were slain before his eyes,* and *all the princes of Judah, ver. 10.* then *his eyes were put out,* he was *bound in chains,* and carried in triumph to Babylon; perhaps they made sport with him, as they did with Samson when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his life (I cannot say his days, for he saw day no more) in darkness and misery, he was kept in prison till *the day of his death,* but had some honour done him at his funeral, *chap. xxxiv. 5.* Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12. ¶ Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, (which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem. 13. And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire: 14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. 15. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, left certain of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and for husbandmen. 17. Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. 18. The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. 19. And the basons, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away. 20. The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brazen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 21. And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow. 22. And a chapter of brass was upon it, and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass. The second pillar also, and the pomegranates were like unto these. 23. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the net-work were an hundred round about.

We have here an account of the woeful harock that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of

Nebuzar-adan, who was captain of the guard, or general of the army in this action. In the margin he is called the *chief of the slaughter-men*, or executioners, for soldiers are but slaughter-men, and God employs them as executioners of his sentence against a sinful people. Nebuzar-adan was chief of those soldiers, but in the execution he did, we have reason to fear he had no eye to God, but he served the king of Babylon and his own designs, now he came into Jerusalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the slaughter-men there. And, 1. He laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of every thing that was valuable, he *burnt the house of the Lord,* that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him, *Isa. lxiv. 10.* 2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built, after he had built the temple, which was ever since *the king's house.* 3. He burnt *all the houses of Jerusalem,* that is, all the houses of the great men, or those particularly; if any escaped, it was only some sorry cottages for the poor of the land. 4. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem, to be revenged upon them for standing in the way of his army so long. Thus of a defended city, it was made a ruin, *Isa. xxv. 2.* 5. He carried away many into captivity, *ver. 15,* he took away *certain of the poor of the people,* i. e. of the people in the city, for the poor of the land, i. e. poor of the country, he left for vine-dressers and husbandmen. He also carried off the residue of the people that remained in the city, that had escaped the sword and famine; and the deserters, such as he thought fit, or rather such as God thought fit; for he had already determined some for the pestilence, some for the sword, some for famine, and some for captivity, *Jer. xv. 2.*

But nothing is more particularly and largely related here, than the carrying away of the appurtenances of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, *the vessels of silver and gold,* yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, *ver. 19.* But most of the temple-prey that was now seized was of brass; which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after, because the poor people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, *chap. xxvii. 19, &c.* when the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were put down too, and both in token that God, who was the strength and stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect those, nor pillars sustain those from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, for there was nothing built upon them, but for ornament and significance. They were called *Jachin, he will establish;* and *Boaz, in him is strength;* so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* from 1 Kings vii. 17. that the extraordinary beauty and stateliness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away; for the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice or offering, *1 Sam. iii. 84.* It is said, *ver. 20.* *The brass of all these vessels was without weight,* so it was in the making of them, *1 Kings vii. 47.* *the weight of the brass was not then found out,* *2 Chron. iv. 8.* and so it was in the destroying of them. Those that made great spoil of them, did not stand to weigh them, as purchasers do, for whatever they weighed it was all their own.

24. ¶ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 25. He took also out of the city, an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war, and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. 26. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. 28. This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30. In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

We have here a very melancholy account.

1. Of the slaughter of some great men in cold blood, at Riblah, seventy-two in number, according to the number of the elders of *Numb. xi. 26, 27.* so they are computed, *2 Kings xxv. 18, 19.* five out of the temple, two out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there it is said there were five, here, there were seven of those that were near the king; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself, and Ebed-melech, but they were both discharged, as we have read before, so that they were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and, it is probable, such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. Seraiah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a quiet prince, *chap. li. 59.* but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but unquiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of divine justice.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come and see now Judah was carried away captive out of his own land, *ver. 27.* and how it spued them out as it spued out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, *Lev. xviii. 28.* Now here is an account,

(1.) Of two captivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, the same with that which is said to be in

his eighth year, 2 Kings xxiv. 12. another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said, *ver.* 12. to be in his nineteenth year: But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, 2 Kings xxiv. 14—16. when there were eighteen thousand carried captive, whereas here they are said to be three thousand and three and twenty; and with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter, for when all the residue of the people were carried away, *ver.* 15, one would think there should be more than eight hundred and thirty-two souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away, were *put to death* as rebels.

(2.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem, *ver.* 30. then Nebuzar-adan came and *carried away seven hundred and forty-five Jews*; it is probable, this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that these who were now taken, were aiders and abettors of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives which we have, *ver.* 30, *All the persons were four thousand and six hundred*, we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how they came to be so numerous again, as afterwards we find them; for it should seem that, as at first in Egypt, so again in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31. ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison. 32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon. 33. And changed his prison-garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 Kings xxv. 27—30. only there it is said to be done on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, here on

the twenty-fifth; but in a thing of this nature two days break no squares in the account: It is probable, the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story.

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well affected to the prisoner could not procure him any favour, nor one smile from his father; no more than Jonathan could for David from his father: but when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, *ver.* 32. though not to a throne of power. As before the robes were changed into prison-garments, so now they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world, prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other, that we may learn to rejoice as, *though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.*

3. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last, Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner, in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity, that he had forgot the sweets of liberty; or rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. *Dum spiro spera*, while there is life there is hope; *non si male nunc, & olim sic erit.*

4. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word, *Psalms cvi. 46. He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.* He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression will find, that it is not in vain to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn in general, 1. That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt. 2. That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. 3. That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse from sin and exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. 4. That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings, any more than his promises, of none effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatening: Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

AN

E X P O S I T I O N

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

Upon the Book of the

Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Since it is certainly true what Solomon saith, contrary to the common opinion of the world, that *Sorrow is better than laughter*, and, *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting*, we should come to the reading and consideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly, but with an expectation to edify ourselves by them; which that we may do, we must compose ourselves to a holy sadness, and resolve to weep with the weeping prophet. Let us consider, (1.) The title of this book; in the Hebrew it has none, but is called (as the books of Moses are) from the first word, *Ecah*, how; but the Jewish commentators call it as the Greeks do, and we from them, *Kinoh*, Lamentations. As we have sacred odes or songs of joy, so have we sacred elegies or songs of lamentation; such variety of methods has infinite Wisdom taken to work upon us and move our affections, and so soften our hearts and make them susceptible of the impressions of divine truths, as the wax of the seal. We have not only *pip'd unto you*, but have *mourn'd* likewise, *Mal. xi. 17.* (2.) The penman of this book; it was Jeremiah the prophet, who is here Jeremiah the poet, and *vates* signifies both; therefore this book is fitly adjoined to the book of his prophecy, and is an appendix to it. We had there at large the predictions of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the history of them, to shew how punctually the predictions were accomplished, for the confirming of our faith: Now here we have the expressions of his sorrow upon occasion of them, to shew that he was very sincere in the protestations he had often made, that he did not desire the woeful day, but on the contrary the prospect of it filled him with bitterness. When he saw these calamities at a distance, he wished his *head waters*, and his *eyes fountains of tears*; and when they came, he made it to appear he did not dissemble in that wish, and that he was far from being disaffected to his country, which was the crime his enemies charged him with. Though his country had been very unkind to him, and though the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet, and a punishment of them for prosecuting him as a false prophet, which would have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he sadly lamented it, and herein shewed a better temper than that which Jonah was of with respect to Nineveh. (3.) The occasion of these Lamentations was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the dissolution of the Jewish state both civil and ecclesiastical thereby. Some of the Rabbins will have these to be the Lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occasion of the death of Josiah, which are mentioned, 2 Chron xxxv. 25. But though it is true that that opened the door to all the following calamities, yet these *Lamentations* seem to be penned in the sight, not in the foresight of those calamities; when they were already come, not when they were at a distance; and there is nothing of Josiah in them, and his praise, as was, no question, in the *Lamentations* for him. No, it is Jerusalem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have these *Lamentations* to be contained in the roll which Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, and which Jehoiachin burnt; and they suggest, that at first there were in it only the first, second,

second, and fourth chapters, but the third and fifth were the *many like words* that were afterwards added; but this is a groundless fancy, that roll is expressly said to be a repetition and summary of the prophet's sermons, *Jer. xxxvi. 2.* (4.) The composing of it; it is not only poetical, but alphabetical, all except the fifth chapter, as some of David's psalms are; each verse beginning with a several letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the first aleph, the second beth, &c. but the third chapter is a triple alphabet, the three first beginning with aleph, the three next with beth, &c. which was a help to memory, it being designed that these mournful ditties should be got by heart, and was an elegance in writing them valued, and therefore not now to be despised. They observe, that in the second, third, and fourth chapters, the letter *pe* is put before *ah*, which in all the Hebrew alphabets follows it; a reason for which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, That the letter *qin*, which is the numeral letter for LXX. was thus, by being displaced, made remarkable, to put them in mind of the seventy years, at the end of which God would turn again their captivity. (5.) The use of it: Of great use no doubt it was to the pious Jews in their sufferings, furnishing them with spiritual language to express their natural grief by; helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion among them and their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon directing their tears into the right channel; for they are here taught to mourn for sin, and mourn to God; and withal encouraging their hopes, that God would yet return and have mercy upon them: And it is of use to us, to affect us with godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living members of it, and are resolved to take our lot with it.

C H A P. I.

We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation, twenty-two stanzas, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed, and her present deplorable condition aggravated, by comparing it with her former prosperous state; and all along sin is acknowledged and complained of as the procuring cause of all these miseries; and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies, and applied to for compassion towards them. The chapter is all of a piece, and several remonstrances are interwoven; but here is, 1. A complaint made to God of their calamities, and his compassionate consideration desired, ver. 1—11. 2. The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired, ver. 12—17. 3. An appeal to God and his righteousness concerning it, ver. 18—22. in which he is justified in their affliction, and is humbly solicited to justify himself in their deliverance.

1. **H**OW doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! 2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers, she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. 3. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. 5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper: for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. 6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. 7. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths: 8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. 9. Her filthiness is in her skirts, she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O LORD behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself. 10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation. 11. All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve their soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

Those that have any disposition to weep with them that weep, one would think, should scarce be able to refrain from tears at the reading of these verses. so very pathetic are the lamentations here.

1. The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing, and by many circumstances very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

(1.) As to their civil state.

1. A city that was populous is now depopulated, ver. 1. It is spoken of by way of admiration; Who would have thought that ever it should come to this! Or by way of enquiry; What is it that hath brought it to this? Or by way of lamentation; Alas, alas, (as Rev. xviii. 10—16—19.) how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! She was full of her own people, that replenished her; and full of the people of other nations that resorted to her, with whom she had both profitable commerce and pleasant converse: But now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her; she sits solitary: The chief places of the city are not now, as they used to be, place of concourse, where wisdom cried, Prov. i. 20, 21. and justly are they left unfrequented, because wisdom's cry there was not heard. Note, Those that are never so much increased, God can soon diminish. How is she become as a widow! Her king that was, or should have been as a husband to her, is cut off and gone: Her God is departed from her, and hath given her a bill of divorce: She is emptied of her children, is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, in state, not Jerusalem, no, not Babylon herself, be secure and say, I sit as a queen, and shall never sit as a widow, Isa. xlvii. 8. Rev. xviii. 7.

2. A city that had dominion, is now in subjection. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some, and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her presents, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really princess among the provinces, and every sheaf bowed to hers, even the princes of the people entreated her favour: But now the tables are turned, she has not only lost her friends, and sits solitary, but has lost her freedom too, and sits tributary; she paid tribute to Egypt first, and then to Babylon. Note, Sin brings a people not only into solitude but into slavery.

3. A city that used to be full of mirth, is now become melancholy, and upon all accounts full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; it has been the joy of the whole earth, but now she weepeth sore, her daughter is turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone; she weeps in the night, as true mourners do that weep in secret, in silence and solitude; in the night, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant. What the prophets head was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is as waters, and her eyes fountains of tears, so that she weeps day and night, Jer. ix. 1. her tears are continually on her cheeks: Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh grief extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them. Note, There is nothing more commonly seen under the sun, than the tears of the oppressed, with whom the clouds return after the rain, Eccl. iv. 1.

4. Those that were separated from the heathen, now dwell among the heathen; those that were a peculiar people, are now a mingled people, ver. 3. Judah is gone into captivity, out of their own land into the land of their enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide, among those that are aliens to God and the covenants of promise, with whom she findeth no rest, no satisfaction of mind, or any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place at the will of the victorious imperious tyrants. And again, ver. 5. Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy; they that were to have been the seed of the next generation are carried off; so that the land that is now desolate is likely to be still desolate and lost for want of heirs. Those that dwell among their own people, and that a free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy, if they would but consider the miseries of those that are forced into strange countries.

5. Those that used in their wars to conquer, are now conquered and triumphed over. All her persecutors overtook her between the straits, ver. 3. they gained all possible advantages against her, so that her people unavoidably fall into the hand of the enemy, for there was no way to escape ver. 7. they were hemmed in on every side, and which way soever they attempted to flee, they found themselves embarrassed; and when they made the best of their way, they could make nothing of it, but were overtaken and overcome; so that every where her adversaries are the chief, and her enemies prosper, ver. 5. which way soever their sword turns they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin! If we allow that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will our enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

6. Those that had been not only a distinguished but a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt, ver. 8. All that honoured her before despise her; those that courted an alliance with her, now value it not; that caressed her when she was in pomp and prosperity, sigh her now she is in distress, because they have seen her nakedness. By the prevalency of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness, and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalency of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light and is every where talked of. Now it appears how they have vilified themselves by their sins, the enemies magnify themselves against them, ver. 9. they trample upon them and insult over them, and in their eyes they are become vile, the tail of the nations, that were the head. Note, Sin is the reproach of any people.

7. Those that lived in a fruitful way, were ready to perish, and many of them did perish for want of necessary food, ver. 11. All her people sigh in despondency and despair, they are ready to faint away, their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for they seek bread, and seek it in vain: They were brought at last to that extremity, that there was no bread for the people of the land, Jer. lii. 6. and in their captivity they had much ado to get bread, chap. v. 6. They have given their pleasant things, their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them, for meat to relieve the soul, or, as the margin is, to make the soul come again, when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other cordial but meat. All that a man hath will he give for life, and for bread, which is the staff of life. Let those that abound in pleasant things, not be proud of them, or fond of them, for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for necessary things. And let those who have competent food to relieve their souls be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleasant things.

(2.) We have here an account of their miseries in their ecclesiastical state, the ruin of their sacred interest, which was much more to be lamented than that of the secular concerns.

1. Their religious feasts were no more observed, no more frequented, ver. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn, they look melancholy, overgrown with grass and weeds. It used to be a pleasant diversion to see people continually passing and repassing in the highway that led to the temple, but now you may stand there long enough and see no body stir, for none come to the solemn feasts, a full end is put to them by the destruction of that which was the city of our solemnities, Isa. xxxiii. 20. The solemn feast had been neglected and profaned, Isa. i. 11, 12. and therefore justly is an end now put to them.

them: But when thus the ways of Zion are made to mourn, all the sons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to see religious assemblies broken up and scattered, and those restrained from them that would gladly attend them. And as the ways of Zion mourned, so the gates of Zion, in which the faithful worshippers used to meet are desolate, for there is none to meet in them. Time was when the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but now he hath forsaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it cannot but fare with them, as it did with the temple when Christ quitted it, *Behold your house is left unto you desolate*, Matt. xxiii. 38.

2. Their religious persons were quite disabled to perform their wonted services, were quite dispirited; her priests sigh for the desolations of the temple, their songs are turned into sighs; they sigh for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they sigh as the people, ver. 11. *for want of bread*, because the offerings of the Lord, which were their livelihood, failed. It is time to sigh when the priests the Lord's ministers sigh. Her virgins also that used, with their music and dancing, to grace the solemnities of their feasts, are afflicted and in heaviness. Notice is taken of their service in the day of Zion's prosperity, *Psal. lxxviii. Among them were the damsels playing their timbrels*, and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. *Her virgins are afflicted*, and therefore she is in bitterness, i. e. all the inhabitants of Zion are so whose character it is, that they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and that to them the reproach of it is a burden, *Zeph. iii. 18*.

3. Their religious places were profaned, ver. 10. *The heathen entered into her sanctuary*, into the temple itself, into which no Israelite was permitted to enter, though never so reverently and devoutly, but the priests only: *The stranger that comes nigh, even to worship there, shall be put to death*. Thither the heathen now crowd rudely in, not to worship, but to plunder. God had commanded that the heathen should not so much as enter into the congregation, nor be incorporated with the people of the Jews, *Deut. xxiii. 3*. yet now they enter into the sanctuary without controul. Note, Nothing is more grievous to those who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws and the contempts they see put upon sacred things. What the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary, was complained of, *Psal. lxxiv. 3, 4*.

4. Their religious utensils, and all the rich things with which the temple was adorned and beautified, and which were made use of in the worship of God, were made a prey to the enemy, ver. 10. *The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things*, hath grasped them all, seized them all for himself: What these pleasant things are we may learn from *Isa. lxi. 11*. where, to the complaint of the burning of the temple, it is added, *all our pleasant things are laid waste*: the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God's presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces and carried away: Thus from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed, ver. 6. *The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion*: the temple, that holy and beautiful house, when that was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges, and seals of the covenant, *Zech. xi. 10*.

5. Their religious days were made a jest of, ver. 7. *The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths*: They laughed at them for their observing of one day in seven, as a day of rest from worldly business: Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for it, *Cui septima queque fui lux ignava, & vitæ partem non attigit ullam*, for losing a seventh part of their time; whereas sabbaths, if they be sanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account than all the days of the week beside. And whereas the Jews professed they did it in obedience to their God and to his honour, they asked them what they got by it now, what profit had they in keeping the ordinances of their God, who now deserted them in their distress. Note, It is a very great trouble to all that love God, to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his sabbaths; Zion calls them her sabbaths, for the sabbath was made for men; they are his institutions, but they are her privileges; and the contempt put upon sabbaths all the sons of Zion take to themselves, and lay to heart accordingly; and will not look upon sabbaths, or any other divine ordinances, or less honourable, nor value themselves less, for their being mocked at.

6. That which greatly aggravated all these grievances was, that her present state was just the reverse of what it had been when time was, ver. 7. Now, in the days of affliction and misery, when every thing was black and dismal, she remembers all her pleasant things that he had in the days of old, and now knows how to value them better than formerly when she had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them: and adversity is most hardly born by those that are fallen into it from the height of prosperity. This cut David to the heart, when he was banished from God's ordinances, that he could remember when he went with the multitude to the house of God, *Psal. xlii. 4*.

2. The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring provoking cause of all these calamities: Whoever are the instruments, God is the author of all these troubles, it is the Lord that has afflicted her, ver. 5. and he has done as a righteous Judge, for she has sinned.

(1.) Her sins are for number numberless: Are her troubles many? her sins are many more: It is for the multitude of her transgressions that the Lord has afflicted her. See *Jer. xxx. 14*. When the transgressions of a people are multiplied, we cannot say, as Job doth, it is without cause that their wounds are multiplied, *Job. ix. 17*.

(2.) They are for nature exceeding heinous, ver. 8. *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; hath sinned sin*, so the word is; sinned wilfully, deliberately; hath sinned that sin; which of all others is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, the sin of idolatry. The sins of Jerusalem, that makes such a profession and enjoys such privileges, are of all others the most grievous sins. She hath sinned grievously, ver. 8. and therefore, ver. 9. she came down wonderfully. Note, Grievous sins bring wondrous ruin; there are some workers of iniquity to whom there is a strange punishment, *Job. xxxi. 3*.

(3.) They are such sins as may plainly be read in the punishment, 1. They have been very oppressive, and therefore are justly oppressed, ver. 3. *Judah is gone into captivity*, and it is because of affliction and great servitude, i. e. because the rich among them afflicted the poor, and made them serve with rigour, and particularly (as the Chaldee paraphraseth it) because they had oppressed their Hebrew servants, which is charged upon them, *Jer. xxxiv. 11*. Oppression was one of their crying sins, *Jer. vi. 6, 7*. and it is a sin that cries loud. 2. They have made themselves vile, and therefore are justly vilified. They all despise her, ver. 8. for her filthiness is in her skirts; it appears upon her garments that she hath rolled them in the mire of sin. None can stain our glory, if we did not stain it ourselves. 3. They have been very secure, and therefore are justly surprised with this ruin, ver. 9. She remembereth not her last end, she did not take the warning that was given her to consider her latter end, to consider what would be the end of such wicked courses as she took, and therefore she came down wonderfully, in an

astonishing manner, that she might be made to feel what she would not fear, therefore God shall make their plagues wonderful.

3. Jerusalem's friends are here complained of as false and faint-hearted, and very unkind; they have all dealt treacherously with her, ver. 2. so that in effect, they are become her enemies. Her deceivers have created her as much vexation as her destroyers: The staff that breaks under us may do us as great a mischief as the staff that beats us, *Ezek. xxxix. 6, 7*. Her princes, that should have protected her, have not courage enough to make head against the enemy for their own preservation; they are like harts, that upon the first alarm, betake themselves to flight, and make no resistance; nay, they are like harts that are famished for want of pasture, and therefore are gone without strength before the pursuer, and having no strength for flight, are soon run down and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unneighbourly, for, 1. There is none to help her, ver. 7. either they could not, or would not; nay, 2. She has no comforter, none to sympathize with her, or suggest any thing to alleviate her griefs, ver. 7—9. like Job's friends, they saw it was to no purpose, her grief was so great; and miserable comforters were they all in such a case.

4. Jerusalem's God is here complained to, concerning all these things, and all is referred to his compassionate consideration, ver. 9. O Lord, behold my affliction, and take cognizance of it; and ver. 11. See, O Lord, and consider, take order about it. Note, The only way to make ourselves easy under our burdens is, to cast them upon God first, and leave it to him to do with us as seemeth him good.

12. ¶ It is nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger. 13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones; and it prevaleth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. 14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fail, the LORD hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up. 15. The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press. 16. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed. 17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. 18. ¶ The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. 19. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls. 20. Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death. 21. They have heard that I sigh: there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me. 22. Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them, as thou has done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.

The complaints here are for substance the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but in these verses the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, doth more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in these calamities, and the righteousness of his hand.

1. The church in distress doth here magnify her affliction; and yet no more than there was cause for; her groaning was not heavier than her strokes. She appeals to all spectators, *See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow*, ver. 12. This might, perhaps, be truly said of Jerusalem's griefs, but we are apt to apply it too sensibly to ourselves when we are in trouble, and more than there is cause for. Because we feel most from our own burden, and cannot be persuaded to reconcile ourselves to it, we are ready to cry out, Surely, never was sorrow like unto our sorrow; whereas if our troubles were to be thrown into a common stock with those of others and then an equal dividend made, share and share alike, rather than stand to that, we would each of us say, Pray, give me my own again.

2. She doth here look beyond the instruments to the author of her troubles, and own them all to be directed, determined, and disposed of by him. It is the Lord that has afflicted me, and he has afflicted me because he is angry with me; the greatness of his displeasure may be measured by the greatness of my distress; it is in the day of his fierce anger, ver. 12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs, when we see them arising from God's wrath; so the church doth here. 1. She is as one in a fever, and the fever is of God's sending; he hath sent fire into my bones, ver. 13. a preternatural heat, which prevails against them, so that they are burnt like a hearth, *Psal. cii. 3*. pained and wasted, and dried away. 2. She is as one in a net, which the more he struggles to get out of, the more he is entangled in, and the net is of God's spreading: The enemies could not have succeeded in their stratagems, but that God hath spread a net for my net. She is as one in a wilderness, whose way is embarrassed, solitary, and tiresome: he hath turned me back, that I cannot go on, hath made me desolate, that I have nothing to support me with, but am faint all the day.

3. She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for service, but for penance, tied neck and heels together, ver. 14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by

his hand. Observe, We never are entangled in any yoke but it is framed out of our own transgressions: The sinner is *holden with the cords of his own sins*, Prov. v. 22. The yoke of Christ's command is an easy yoke, Matt. xi. 30. but that of our own transgressions is a heavy one. God is said to bind this yoke when he chargeth guilt upon us, and brings us into those inward and outward troubles which our sins have deserved; when conscience, as his deputy, binds us over to his judgment, then the *yoke is bound* and wreathed by the hand of his justice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it. 5. She is as one in the dirt, and he it is that has *trod under foot all her mighty men*, that has disabled them to stand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and so left them to be trampled upon by their proud conquerors, ver. 15. Nay, she is as one in a wine-press, not only trodden down, but trodden to pieces, crushed as grapes in the wine-press of God's wrath, and her blood pressed out as wine, and it is God that has thus *trod the virgin, the daughter of Judah*. 6. She is in the hand of her enemies, and it is the Lord that has delivered her *into their hands*, ver. 14. *he has made my strength to fail*, so that I am not able to make head against them; nay, not only not able to rise up against them, but not able to rise up from them, and then *he hath delivered me into their hands*; nay, ver. 15. *he hath called an assembly against me, to crush my young men*, and such an assembly, as it is in vain to think of opposing; and again, ver. 17. *the Lord has commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him*. He that had many a time *commanded deliverances for Jacob*, Psal. xlv. 4. now commands an invasion against Jacob, because Jacob had disobeyed the commands of his law.

3. She justly demands a share in the pity and compassion of those that were the spectators of her misery, ver. 12. *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Can you look upon me without concern? What! are your hearts as adamant, and your eyes as marbles, that you cannot bestow upon me one compassionate thought, or look, or tear? Are not you also in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbour's house is on fire? There are those to whom Zion's sorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*. How pathetically doth she beg their compassion! ver. 18. *Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow*. Hear my complaints, and see what cause I have for them! This is a request like that of Job, chap. xix. 21. *Have pity, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! It helps to make a burden sit lighter, if our friends sympathize with us, and mingle their tears with ours, for that is an evidence that, though we are in affliction, we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing*.

4. She justifies her own grief, though it was very extreme, for these calamities, ver. 16. *For these things I weep, I weep in the night*, ver. 2. when none sees, *mine eye, mine eye runs down with water*. Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God; Zion's sons are often Zion's mourners; *Zion spreads forth her hands*, ver. 17. which is here an expression rather of despair than of desire; she flings out her hands as giving all for gone. Let us see how she accounts for this passionate grief. 1. Her God is withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were stolen from him, cried out, *What have I more? And what is this that ye say unto me? What aileth thee?* The church here grieves excessively, for, *said she, the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me*; God is the comforter, he used to be so to her, he only can administer effectual comforts, it is his word that speaks them, it is his Spirit that speaks them to us: His are strong consolations, able to *relieve the soul*, to bring it back when it is gone, and we cannot of ourselves *fetch it again*; but now he is departed in displeasure, he is far from me, and beholds me *afar off*. Note, It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance. 2. Her children are removed from her, and are in no capacity to help her; it is for them she weeps, as Rachel for her's, *because they were not*, and therefore *she refuseth to be comforted*. *Her children were desolate, because the enemy prevailed against them, there is none of all her sons to take her by the hand*, Isa. li. 18. they cannot help themselves, and how should they help her? Both the damsels and the youths, that were her joy and hope, *are gone into captivity*, ver. 18. It is said of the Chaldeans, that they had *no compassion upon young men or maidens*, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. 3. Her friends failed her, some would not, and others could not give her any relief. She spread forth her hands, as begging relief but *there is none to comfort her*, ver. 17. none that can do it, none that cares to do it; she called for her *lovers*, and, to engage them to help her *called them her lovers*, but they deceived her, ver. 19. they proved like the *brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller*, Job vi. 15. Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon and raise our expectations from, we are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Assyria was her confidants, but they deceived her: Those that made court to her in her prosperity were shy of her, and strange to her in her adversity. Happy they that have made God their friend, and keep themselves in his love, for he will not deceive them. 4. Those whose office it was to guide her, were disabled to do her any service: *The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger*, ver. 19. *they gave up the ghost*, or were ready to expire, *while they sought the meat*; went a begging for bread to keep them alive. *The famine is sore indeed in the land*, when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters, but how should they comfort others, when they themselves were comfortless? *They have heard that I sigh*, which should have summoned them to mine assistance, but *there is none to comfort me*. *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*. 5. Her enemies were too hard for her, and then insulted over her; they have *pretailed*, ver. 16, *Abroad the sword bereaveth*, and slays all that comes in its way, and *at home all provisions are cut off by the besiegers*, so that *there is as death*, i. e. famine, which is as bad as the pestilence, or worse. *The sword without, and terror within*, Deut. xxxii. 25. And as the enemies were very barbarous that were the instruments of the calamity, so were they that were the standers-by, the Edomites and Ammonites, that bore ill-will to Israel, they have *heard of my trouble, and are glad that thou hast done it*, ver. 21. they rejoice in the trouble itself, they rejoice that it is God's doing, it pleaseth them to find that God and his Israel are fallen out, and they carry it accordingly with a great deal of strangeness toward them: *Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them, that they are afraid of touching, and are shy of*, ver. 17. Upon all these accounts, it cannot be wondered at, nor can she be blamed, that *her sighs are many*, in grieving for what is, and *her heart is faint*, (ver. 22.) in fear of what is yet farther likely to be.

5. She justifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her sins had deserved these severe chastenings. The yoke that lies so heavy and binds so hard, is *the yoke of her transgressions*, ver. 14. The fetters we are held in are of our own making, and it is with our own rod that we are beaten. When the church had spoken here, as if she thought the Lord severe, she doth well to correct herself, at least to explain herself by acknowledging, ver. 18. *The Lord is righteous*: He doth us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with any injustice in it; Vol. II. No. CXXX.

how unrighteous soever men are, we are sure *the Lord is righteous*, and manifests his justice, though they contradict all the laws of their's. Note, Whatever our troubles are, which God is pleased to inflict upon us, we must own that therein he is *righteous*; we understand neither him nor ourselves if we do not own it, 2 Chron. xxii. 6. She owns the equity of God's actions, by owning the iniquity of her own, *I have rebelled against his commandments*, ver. 18. and again, ver. 20. *I have grievously rebelled*. We cannot speak bad enough of sin, and we must always speak worse of our own sin, must call it *rebellion, grievous rebellion*; and very grievous sin is to all true penitents. It is this that lies heavier upon her than the afflictions she was under; *my bowels are troubled*, they work within me as the troubled sea, *my heart is turned with me*, is restless, is turned upside down, *for I have grievously rebelled*. Note, Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, and must affect the soul.

6. She appeals both to the mercy and to the justice of God in her present case. 1. She appeals to the mercy of God concerning her own sorrows, which had made her the proper object of his compassion, ver. 20. *Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress*; take cognisance of my case, and take such order for my relief as thou pleasest. Note, It is matter of comfort to us, that the troubles that oppress our spirits are open before God's eye. 2. She appeals to the justice of God concerning the injuries that her enemies did her, ver. 21. 22. *Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called*, the day that is fixed in the counsels of God, and published in the prophecies, when mine enemies, that now persecute me, *shall be like unto me*, when the cup of trembling, now put into my hands, shall be put into their's. It may be read as a prayer, Let the day appointed come, and so it goes on, *Let their wickedness come before me*, let it come to be remembered, let it come to be reckoned for; take vengeance on them, for all the wrong they have done to me, Psalm cix. 14. 15. hasten the time when thou wilt do to them for their transgression, *as thou hast done to me* for mine. This prayer amounts to a protestation against all thoughts of a coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, subscribing to that which God had in his word spoken of it. Note, Our prayers may and must agree with God's word; and what day God has there called, we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church's enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

CHAP. II.

This second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same: It begins with *Echah*, as that did, *How sad is our case! Alas! for us*. 1. Here is the anger of Zion's God taken notice of, as the cause of her calamities, ver. 1—9. 2. Here is the sorrow of Zion's children taken notice of, as the effect of her calamities, ver. 10—19. 3. The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration, ver. 20—22. *The hand that wounded must make whole*.

1. **H**OW hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! 2. The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom, and the princes thereof. 3. He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. 4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire. 5. The LORD was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong-holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. 6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. 7. The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast. 8. The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together. 9. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God's church of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem, but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were groaning under. The grief is not so much that such and such things are done, as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath and in his hot displeasure: He is become their enemy, and fights against them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery.

1. Time was when God's delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and appeared for her as her friend, but now his displeasure is against her, he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an enemy. This is

is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done, he has done in his anger, this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is *the day of his anger*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. it is in his wrath, and ver. 3. it is in his fierce anger that he has thrown down and cut off: and ver. 6. in the indignation of his anger. Note, To those who know how to value God's favour nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in wrath wound deep. It is God's wrath that burns against Jacob like a flaming fire, ver. 3. and it is a consuming fire, it devours round about, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the fury that is poured out like fire, ver. 4. like the fire and brimstone which was rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah: but it was their sin that kindled this fire. God is such a tender father to his children, that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cause to be angry? nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God's covenant with them was, that if they would obey his voice, he would be an enemy to their enemies, Exod. xxiii. 22. and he had been so, as long as they kept close to him; but now he is an enemy to them; at least he is as an enemy, ver. 5. He hath bent his bow like an enemy, ver. 4. He stood with his right hand stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it as an adversary. God is not really an enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them, and corrects them in anger. We may be sorely displeased against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having enmity to. But some times he is as an enemy to them, when all his providences concerning them seem in outward appearance to have a tendency to their ruin; when every thing makes against them and nothing for them. But blessed be God, Christ is our peace, our peace-maker, who hath slain the enmity, and in him we may agree with our adversary, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

2. Time was when God's church appeared very bright and illustrious, and considerable among the nations, but now the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud, ver. 1. a dark cloud, which is very terrible to herself, and through which she cannot see his face: a thick cloud, so the word signifies, a black cloud, which eclipses all her glory, and conceals her excellency; not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple, and filled it with his glory: No, that side of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians in the Red-sea. The beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth, their princes, 2. Sam. i. 19. their religious worship, their beauty of holiness, all that which recommended them to the affection and esteem of their neighbours, and rendered them amiable, which had lifted them up to heaven, was now withered and gone; because God had covered it with a cloud. He hath cut off all the horn of Israel, ver. 3. all her beauty and majesty, Psal. cxxxii. 17. all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority. They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God cut off their horn; he disabled them to resist and oppose their enemies, he turned back their right hand, so that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy, when God draws it back and withers it, as he did Jeroboam's. Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famed for courage were not able to stand their ground, or make good their post.

3. Time was when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted to by the inhabitants, and let alone by the enemy as impregnable; but now the Lord has in anger swallowed them up, they are quite gone, the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no opposition: the stately structures that were their strength and beauty are pulled down and laid waste. (1.) The Lord hath in anger swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, ver. 2. both the cities and country-houses, they are burnt, or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined they seem to have been swallowed up, and no remains left of them. He hath swallowed up and hath not pitied; one would have thought it pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed; and that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compassions seemed to fail; he hath swallowed up Israel, as a lion swallows up his prey, ver. 5. (2.) He hath swallowed up not only her common habitations, but her palaces, all her palaces, the habitations of their princes and great men, ver. 5. though those were most stately and strong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as their's were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall consume them, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. v. 4. (3.) He hath destroyed not only their dwelling-places, but their strong holds, their castles, citadels, and places of defence, these he hath thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground; for shall they stand in the way of his judgments, and give check to the progress of them? No, let them droop like leaves in autumn, let them be rased to the foundations, and made to touch the ground, ver. 2. and again, ver. 5. he hath destroyed his strong holds, for what strength could they have against God? And thus hath he increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation, for they could not but be in a mighty consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted on, ver. 7, 8, 9. In order to the swallowing up of her palaces, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, which were their security, and when they are broken down, the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a wall of fire round about them. This God did in his anger, and yet he hath done it deliberately, it is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for the Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he brought the Chaldean army in on purpose to do this execution. Note, Whatever desolations God makes in his church, they are all according to his counsels; he performeth the thing that is appointed for us, even that which makes most against us. But when it is done, he hath stretched out a line, a measuring line to do it exactly and by measure; hitherto the destruction shall go and no farther; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or, it is meant of the line of confusion, Isa. xxxiv. 11. a levelling line; for he will go on with his work, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying, that right-hand which he stretched out against his people as an adversary, ver. 4. as far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. Therefore he made the rampart of the wall, which the people had rejoiced in, and upon which, perhaps, they had made merry, to lament, and they languished together; the walls and the ramparts, or bulwarks upon them, fell together, and were left to condole one another's fall. Her gates are gone in an instant, so that one would think they were sunk into the ground with their own weight, and he hath destroyed and broken her bars, those bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly he had strengthened, Psalm cxlvii. 13. Gates and bars will stand us in no stead when God hath withdrawn his protection.

4. Time was when their government flourished, their princes made a figure; and their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side, but now it is quite otherwise, he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof, ver. 2. They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things, he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them: He hath given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred, (that is a character we give to majesty) to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by every body, when God has in the indignation of his anger despised the king and the priest, ver. 6. He hath abandoned them, looks upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and priesthood, but as having forfeited both, and then Zedekiah the king was used despitefully, and Seraiah the chief priest put to death as a malefactor: The crown is fallen from their heads, for her king and her princes are among the Gentiles, prisoners among them, insulted over by them, ver. 9. and treated not only as common persons, but as the basest, without any regard had to their character. Note, It is just with God to debase those by his judgments who have by sin debased themselves.

5. Time was when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence with them; but now those were taken from them, that part of the beauty of Israel was gone, which was indeed their greatest beauty.

(1.) The ark was God's footstool, under the mercy-seat, between the cherubims, this was of all other the most sacred symbol of God's presence, it is called his footstool, 1. Chron. xxviii. 2. Psal. xcix. 5.—cxxxii. 7. there the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this, Israel was protected and saved many a time, but now he remembered not his footstool, the ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans: God being angry threw that away, for it shall be no longer his footstool, the earth shall be so, and it had been before the ark was, Isa. lvi. 1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence, when his presence is gone! nor was this the first time that God gave his ark into captivity, Psal. lxxviii. 61. God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

(2.) They that ministered in holy things had been pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion, ver. 4. they had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, chap. iv. 7. none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle, but now these are slain, and their blood mingled with their sacrifices: thus is the priest despised as well as the king. Note, When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain, God must be acknowledged in it, he has done it, and the burning which the Lord has kindled must be bewailed by the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Levit. x. 6.

(3.) The temple was God's tabernacle, as the tabernacle while that was in being is called his temple, Psal. xxvii. 4. and this he has violently taken away, ver. 6. he hath plucked up the stakes of it, and cut the cords, it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has taken it away, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shade when he hath done with it, and has no more occasion for it: he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with as little regret and reluctance as if it were but a cottage in a vineyard, and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, Isa. i. 8. but a booth which the keeper makes, Job. xxvii. 18. When men profane God's tabernacle, it is just with him to take it from them. God has justly refused to dwell in their solemn assemblies, Amos v. 21. they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has destroyed his places of the assembly; what should they do with the places when the services were become an abomination? He hath now abhorred his sanctuary, ver. 7. it has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates, and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in, and called his rest for ever, Psalm cxxxii. 14. Thus he had done to Shiloh. Now the enemies have made as great a noise of revelling and blaspheming in the house of the Lord, as ever had been made with the temple songs and music in the day of a solemn feast, Psalm lxxiv. 4. Some by the places of the assembly, ver. 6. understand not only the temple, but the synagogues and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had burnt up, Psal. lxxiv. 8.

(4.) The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them, but now the Lord hath caused those to be forgotten, not only in the country, among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were there the places left where they used to be observed. Now Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between sabbath times and other times, every day was a day of mourning; so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts, who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. They that have seen the days of the son of man and slighted them, may desire to see one of those days, and not have them, Luke xvii. 22.

(5.) The altar that had sanctified their gifts, is now cast off, for God will no more accept their gifts, nor be honoured by their sacrifices, ver. 7. The altar was the table of the Lord, but God will no longer keep house among them, neither feast them, nor feast with them.

(6.) They had been blest with prophets, and teachers of the law, but now the law is no more, ver. 9. it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes, the tables of the law are gone with the ark, the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should they do with Bibles that had made no better improvement of them when they had them? Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord, God answers them no more by prophets and dreams, which was the melancholy case of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is just with God to say they shall have no more prophets, nor more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them how long. They that misuse God's prophets, justly lose them.

10. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. 11. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. 12. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom. 13. What thing shall I take to

to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee? 14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment. 15. All that pass by clap *their hands* at thee? they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth? 16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed *her up*: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it. 17. The LORD hath done *that* which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries. 18. Their heart cried unto the LORD, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. 19. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thy hands towards him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street. 20. ¶ Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the woman eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the LORD? 21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied. 22. Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

Justly are these called *Lamentations*, and they are very pathetic ones; the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and woe, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, *Ezek. ii. 10.*

1. Copies of lamentations are here presented, and they are painted to the life. (1.) The judges and magistrates that used to appear in robes of state, have laid them aside, or rather are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners, *ver. 10.* the elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, the *thrones of the house of David*, but they *sit upon the ground*, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends *sat with him upon the ground*, *Job ii. 13.* They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they keep silence, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to say. They have *cast dust upon their heads*, and *girded themselves with sackcloth*, as deep mourners used to do; they had lost their power and wealth, and that made them take on thus; *Ploratur lacrymis amissa pecunia veris.* (2.) The young ladies, that used to dress themselves so richly, and *walk with stretched-forth necks*, *Isa. iii. 16.* now are humbled; the *virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground*, they are made to know sorrow that seemed to bid defiance to it, and were always disposed to be merry. (3.) The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners, *ver. 11.* his *eyes do fail with tears*, i. e. he hath wept till he can weep no more, hath almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expressions, his *bowels are troubled*, as they were when he saw these calamities coming, *Jer. iv. 19, 20.* which, one would think, might have excused him now, but even he to whom they were no surprise, yet felt them an insupportable grief, to that degree that his *liver is poured out on the earth*, i. e. he felt, himself a perfect colligation; all his entrails are melted and dissolved, as *Psal. xxii. 14.* Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had before from his own countrymen, nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement, the same that made them prisoners made him a favourite, and yet his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the *destruction of the daughter of his people*, as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and nation are to be lamented by us, though we, for our parts, may escape pretty well.

2. Calls to lamentation are here given. *The heart of the people cried unto the Lord, ver. 18.* Some fear it was not a cry of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful shrieks and outcries, in which they made use of God's name; yet we will charitably suppose that many of them did in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress; and the prophet bids them go on to do so; *O wall of the daughter of Zion*, either ye that stand upon the wall, ye *watchmen on the walls*, *Isa. lxii. 6.* when ye see the enemies encamped about the walls, and making their approaches towards them, or *because of the wall* (that is the subject of the lamentation) because of the *breaking down of the wall*, which was not done till about a month after the city was taken, because of this farther calamity let the *daughter of Zion lament still*. This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, *Neh. i. 3, 4.* *Let tears run down like a river day and night*, weep without intermission, give thyself no rest from weeping, *let not the apple of thine eye cease*. This intimates (1.) That the calamities would be continuing, and the causes of grief would frequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bemoan themselves. (1.) That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

3. Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities that are to be bewailed are very particularly and pathetically described.

(1.) Multitudes perish by famine, a very sore judgment, and piteous is the case of those that fall under it. God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before, *Jer. xiv. 1.* and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore now by the straitness of the siege God brought it upon them in extremity; for, 1. The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms: *The children and sucklings*, whose innocent and helpless state entitles them to relief as soon as any, yet they *swoon in the streets*, *ver. 11.* as *the wounded*, *ver. 12.* there being no food to be had for them, they that are starved die as surely as they that are stabbed; they lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them, and wine to refresh them, for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine, and wanted it now, but there is none for them, so that at length *their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom*, and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again, *ver. 19.* *they faint for hunger in the top of every street*. Yet this is not the worst. 2. There were some little children that were slain by their mothers hands and eaten, *ver. 20.* Such was the scarcity of provision that the women eat the fruit of their own bodies, even their children, when they were but of *five span long*, according to the threatening, *Deut. xxviii. 53.* The like was done in the siege of Samaria, *2 Kings vi. 29.* Such extremities, nay, such barbarities were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we have food convenient, not only for ourselves, but for our children.

(2.) Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another; especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were. 1. They spared no character, no not the most distinguished; even the *priest and the prophet*, who of all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven and veneration on earth, yet *are slain*, not abroad in the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hophni and Phinehas, but in *the sanctuary of the Lord*, the place of their business, and which they hoped would have been a refuge to them. 2. They spared no age, no not those that by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword; for even they *perished by the sword*, the young that were not yet come to bear arms, and the old that had their *quietus*, yet *lie on the ground slain in the streets*, till some kind hand is found that will bury them. 3. They spared no sex, *my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword*. In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil, *Numb. xxxi. 28.* *Judges v. 30.* but here the virgins were put to the sword, as well as the young men. 4. This was the *Lord's doing*, he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction; *Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger*, for it is God that *kills and makes alive*, and saves alive, as he pleaseth. But that which follows is very harsh, *Thou hast killed and not pitied*, for his soul is not grieved for the misery of Israel. The enemies that used them thus cruelly were such as he had both mustered and summoned, *ver. 22.* *Thou hast called in as in a solemn day my terrors round about*, i. e. the Chaldeans that are such a terror to me; enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thick as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival; so that we were quite overpowered with numbers, and none escaped nor remained; Jerusalem was made a perfect slaughter-house. Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used; suddenly cut off that were not so soon reared; *Those that I have swaddled, and brought up, hath mine enemy consumed*, as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher, *Hosea ix. 13.* Zion, that was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

(3.) Their false prophets cheated them, *ver. 14.* This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern, *Jer. xiv. 13.* *Ah, Lord God, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword*; and here he inserts it among his lamentations; *Thy prophets have seen rain and foolish things for thee*; they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see the *visions of the Almighty*, and then to speak his words; but they were all vain and foolish things, their visions were all their own fancies, and if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head or a heated imagination, as appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent: nay, it is most likely they themselves knew the visions they pretended were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves; they are thy prophets, not God's prophets, he never sent them, nor were they pastors after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets *after their hearts*. 1. Prophets should tell people of their faults, should shew them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin: but these prophets knew that would lose them the people's affections and contributions, and knew they could not reprove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time, and therefore *they have not discovered thine iniquity*; they saw it not themselves, or if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger by it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity. 2. Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these *saw for them false burdens*; the messages they pretended to deliver to them from God they knew to be false, and falsely ascribed to God; so that by soothing them up in carnal security they caused that banishment which by plain dealing they might have prevented.

(4.) Their neighbours laughed at them, *ver. 15.* *All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee*. Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway among the nations, it was the envy and terror of all about; and when that city was thus reduced, they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall, *they hissed and wagged the head*, pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former pretensions; *Is this the city (said they) that men called the perfection of beauty?* *Psal. l. 2.* How is it now the perfection of deformity! Where is all its beauty now! *Is this the city that was called the joy of the whole earth?* *Psal. xlviii. 2.* which rejoiced in the gifts of God's bounty and grace, more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in; where is all its joy now, and all its glorying? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others' miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

(5.) Their enemies triumphed over them, *ver. 16.* Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace, now vent their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now *open their mouths*, nay, they widen them, they *hiss and gnash their teeth* in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem. *We have swallowed her up*, it is our doing and it is our gain, it is all our own now; Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been; *certainly this is the day that we have long looked for, we have found it, we have seen it; Aha, so would we have it*. Note, the enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves deceived; for the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*.

(6.) That God in all this appeared against them, *ver. 17.* *The Lord hath done*

done that which he had devised. The destroyers of Jerusalem could have no power against her, unless it were given them from above; they are but the sword in God's hand, it is he that has thrown down and has not pitied; i. e. in this controversy of his with us, we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us; he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; see Job xxx. 11. he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries, hath given them power and matter for pride; this is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God is become their enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God doth, for, 1. It is the performance of his purpose; the Lord had done that which he had devised; it is done with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden resolve; it is the evil that he has framed, Jer. xviii. 11. and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention; what God deviseth against his people, is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue. 2. It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; he has now put in execution his word that he hath commanded in the day of old. When he gave them his law by Moses, he told them what judgments he would certainly inflict upon them if they transgressed that law; and now they had been guilty of the transgression of this law, he had executed the sentence of it, according to Lev. xxvi. 16, &c. Deut. xxviii. 15. Note, In all the providences of God, concerning his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of his word; for there is an exact agreement between the judgment of God's hand and the judgments of his mouth; and when they are compared, they will mutually explain and illustrate each other.

4. Comforts for the cure of these lamentations are here sought for and prescribed. (1.) They are sought for and enquired after, Jer. 13. The prophet seeks to find out some suitable acceptable words to say to her in this case, *Wherewith shall I comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion?* Note, We should endeavour to comfort those whose calamities we lament, and when our passions have made the worst of them, our wisdom should correct them and labour to make the best of them; we should study to make our sympathies with our afflicted friends turn to their consolation. Now the two most common topics of comfort in case of affliction are here tried, but are layed by, because they would not hold: We commonly endeavour to comfort our friends, by telling them, 1. That their case is not singular nor without precedent, there are many whose trouble is greater, and lies heavier upon them than theirs doth: but Jerusalem's case will not admit this argument: *What thing shall I liken to thee, or what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?* What city, what country is there whose case is parallel to thine? What witness shall I produce to prove an example that will reach thy present calamitous state? Alas, there is none? no sorrow like thine! because there is none whose honour was like thine. 2. We tell them, that their case is not desperate, but it may easily be remedied; but neither will that be admitted here, upon a view of human probabilities; for *thy breach is great, like the sea*, like the breach which the sea sometimes makes upon the land, which cannot be repaired, but still grows wider and wider. Thou art wounded, and *who shall heal thee?* No wisdom or power of man can repair the desolations of such a broken shattered state. It is to no purpose therefore, to administer any of these common cordials; therefore, (2.) The method of cure prescribed, is to address themselves to God, and by a penitent prayer to commit their case to him, and to be instant and constant in such prayers, ver. 19. *Arise, out of thy dust, out of thy despondency, cry out in the night, watch unto prayer;* when others are asleep be thou upon thy knees, importunate with God for mercy; *in the beginning of the watches*, of each of the four watches of the night, let thine eyes prevent them, Psal. cxix. 148. then *pour out thine heart like water before the Lord*, be free and full in prayer, be sincere and serious in prayer, open thy mind, spread thy case before the Lord; *lift up thine hands towards him* in holy desire and expectation; beg for the *life of thy young children*, these poor lambs, what have they done? 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. Take with you words, take with you these words, ver. 20. *Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this*, with whom thou hast dealt thus! are they not thine own! the seed of Abraham thy friend, and of Jacob thy chosen? Lord, take their case into thy compassionate consideration! Note, Prayer, is a salve for every sore, even the sorest; a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then leave it with him; *Lord, behold and consider, and thy will be done.*

C H A P. III.

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the composure is somewhat different; that was in long verse, this is in short; another kind of metre; that was in single alphabets, this in a treble one. Here is, 1. A sad complaint of God's displeasure, and the fruits of it, ver. 1—20. 2. Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and distress, ver. 21—36. 3. Duty prescribed in this afflicted state, ver. 37—41. 4. The complaint renewed, ver. 42—54. 5. Encouragement taken to hope in God, and continue waiting for his salvation; with an appeal to his justice against the persecutors of the church, ver. 55—63. Some make all this to be spoken by the prophet himself, when he was imprisoned and persecuted; but it seems rather to be spoken in the person of the church, now in captivity, and in a manner desolate; and in the desolations of which the prophet did in a particular manner interest himself. But the complaints here are somewhat more general than those in the foregoing chapter, being accommodated to the case as well of particular persons as of the public; and intended for the use of the closet rather than of the solemn assembly. Some think Jeremiah makes these complaints, not only as an intercessor for Israel, but as a type of Christ, who was thought by some to be Jeremiah's weeping prophet, because he was much in tears, Matt. xvi. 14. and to him many of the passages here may be applied.

1. **I** Am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. 2. He hath laid me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. 3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. 4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. 5. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travel. 6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. 8. Also when I cry and shout he shutteth out my prayer. 9. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone: he hath made my paths

crooked. 10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. 11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. 12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. 13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. 14. I was a derision to all my people: and their song all the day. 15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. 16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel-stones, he hath covered me with ashes. 17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. 18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: 19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

The title of the cild Psalm might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter, *The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord*; for it is very feelingly and fluently that the complaint is here poured out: Let us observe the particulars of it.

1. The prophet complains that God is angry; this gives both birth and bitterness to the affliction, ver. 1. *I am the man*, the remarkable man, that hath seen affliction, and has felt it sensibly by the rod of his wrath. Note, God is sometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, not as a sword to cut off, but only as a rod to correct; it is to them the rod of his wrath, a chastening which, though grievous for the present, will in the issue be advantageous, by this rod we must expect to see affliction, and if we be made to see more than ordinary affliction by that rod we must not quarrel, for we are sure the anger is just, and the affliction mild and mixed with mercy.

2. That he is at a loss, and altogether in the dark; darkness is put for great trouble and perplexity, the want both of comfort and of direction; this was the case of the complainant, ver. 2. *He hath led me* by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, *into darkness and not unto light*; the darkness I feared, and not into the light I hoped for. And, ver. 6. *He hath set me in dark places*, dark as the grave, like those that be dead of old, that are quite forgotten, no body knows who or what they were. Note, The Israel of God, though the children of light, sometimes walk in darkness.

3. That God appears against him as an enemy, as a professed enemy. God had been for him, but now surely against me is he turned, ver. 3. as far as I can discern, for his hand is turned against me all the day, *I am chastened every morning*, Psal. lxxiii. 14. And when God's hand is continually turned against us, we are tempted to think that his heart is turned against us too, God had said once, Hos. v. 14. *I will be as a lion to the house of Judah*, and now he has made his word good, ver. 10. *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait*, surprising me with his judgments, and as a lion in secret places; so that which way soever I went, I was in continual fear of being set upon, and could never think myself safe. Do men shoot at those they are enemies to? *He hath bent his bow*, the bow that was ordained against the church's persecutors, that is bent against her sons, ver. 12. *He hath set me as a mark for his arrow*, which he aims at, and will be sure to hit, and then the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins, give me a mortal wound, an inward wound, ver. 43. Note, God has many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swift and pierce deep.

4. That he is as one sorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewish state may now be fitly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy, ver. 4. *My flesh and my skin has he made old*, they are wasted and withered, and I look like one that is ready to drop into the grave; nay, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself, ver. 15. *He has filled me with bitterness*, a bitter sense of these calamities. God has access to the spirit, and can so imbitter that, as thereby to imbitter all the enjoyments; as when the stomach is foul, whatever is eaten sours in it. *He has made me drunk with wormwood*, i. e. so intoxicated me with the sense of my afflictions, that I know not what to say or do. He hath mingled gravel with my bread, so that my teeth are broken with it, ver. 16. and what I eat is neither pleasant nor nourishing. *He hath covered me with ashes*, as mourners used to be; or as some read it, he hath fed me with ashes; *I have eaten ashes like bread*, Psalm cii. 9.

5. That he is not able to discern any way to escape or deliverance, ver. 5. *He hath builded against me*, as forts and batteries are built against a besieged city, where there was a way open, it is now quite made up; he hath compassed me on every side with gall and travel, i. e. I vex and fret, and tire myself to find a way of escape, but can find none, ver. 7. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out*; when Jerusalem was besieged, it is said to be compassed in on every side, Luke xix. 43. I am chained, and as some notorious malefactors are double fettered and loaded with irons, so he hath made my chain heavy; and so, ver. 9. *He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone*, not only hedged up my way with thorns, Hos. ii. 6. but stopped it up with a stone wall, which cannot be broken through, so that my paths are made crooked, i. e. I traverse to and fro, from the right hand to the left, to try to get forward, but am still turned back. Those that walk in the crooked paths of sin, crossing God's laws, it is just with God to make them walk in the crooked paths of affliction, crossing their designs and breaking their measures. So, ver. 11. *he hath turned aside my ways*, i. e. hath blasted all my counsels, ruined my projects, so that I am necessitated to yield to my own ruin; he hath pulled me in pieces, he hath torn and gone away, Hos. v. 14. and hath made me desolate, has deprived me of all society and all comfort in my own soul.

6. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers, ver. 8. *When I cry and shout*, as one in earnest, as one that would make him hear, yet he shuts out my prayer, and will not suffer it to have access to him. God's ear useth to be open to the prayers of his people, and his door of mercy to them that knock at it, but now both are shut, even to one that cries and shouts. Thus sometimes God seems to be angry, even against the prayers of his people, Psalm lxxx. 5. and their case is deplorable indeed, when they are denied not only the benefit of an answer, but the comfort of acceptance.

7. That his neighbours make a laughing matter of his troubles, ver. 14. *I was a derision to all my people*, to all the wicked among them, that made themselves and one another merry with the public judgments, and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. I am their song, their neginath, or hand-instrument of music, their tabret, Job. xvii. 6. that they play upon; as Nero on his harp, when Rome was on fire.

8. That he was ready to despair of relief and deliverance. Thou hast not only taken peace from me, but hast removed my soul far off from peace, ver. 17. so that it is not only not within reach, but not within ken; I forget

got prosperity; it is so long since I had it, and so unlikely that I should ever recover it, that I have lost the idea of it; have been so inured to sorrow and servitude, that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, *my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord*, ver. 18. *i. e.* I can no longer stay myself upon God as my support, for I do not find he gives me encouragement to do so: nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless and even my God inexorable. Without doubt it was his infirmity to say thus, *Psaln lxxvii. 10.* for with God there is *everlasting strength*, and he is his people's never-failing hope, whatever they may think.

2. That grief returned upon every remembrance of his troubles, and his reflections were as melancholy as his prospects, ver. 19, 20. Did he endeavour, as Job did, to *forget his complaint*? Job ix. 27. alas! it was to no purpose, he remembers upon all occasions, *the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall*; thus emphatically doth he speak of his affliction, for thus did he think of it, thus heavy did it lie when he reviewed it! It was an affliction that was misery itself; *my affliction and my transgression*, so some read it; my trouble and my sin that brought it upon me; that was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it is sin that makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. *My soul hath them still in remembrance*. The captives in Babylon had all the miseries of the siege in their mind continually, and the flames and ruins of Jerusalem still before their eyes, and *wept when they remembered Zion*: nay, they could never forget Jerusalem, *Psaln cxxxvii. 1—5.* *my soul having them in remembrance is humbled in me*, not only oppressed with a sense of the trouble, but in bitterness for sin. Note, It comes us to have humble hearts under humbling providences, and to renew our penitent humiliations for sin upon every remembrance of our afflictions and miseries. Thus we may get good by former corrections and prevent farther.

21. This I recal to my mind, therefore have I hope
22. ¶ *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed*, because his compassions fail not. 23. *They are new every morning*: great is thy faithfulness. 24. The LORD is my portion, faith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him, 26. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD*. 27. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*. 28. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. 29. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. 30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. 31. For the LORD will not cast off for ever: 32. But though he cause grief: yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. 33. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, 34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, 35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High. 36. To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approveth not.

Here the clouds begin to scatter, and the sky to clear up: the complaint was very melancholy in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the tune is altered, and the mourners in Zion begin to look a little pleasant. But for hope the heart would break. To save the heart from being quite broken, here is something called to mind, which gives ground for hope, ver. 21. which refers to what comes after, not to what goes before. This that follows, *I make to return to my heart*, to the margin words it; what we have had in our hearts and have laid to our hearts, is sometimes as if it were quite lost and forgotten, till God by his grace make it return to our hearts, that it may be ready to us when we have occasion to use it. *I recall it to mind, therefore have I hope*, and am kept from downright despair.

Let us see what these things are which he calls to mind.

1. That as bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse. We are *afflicted by the rod of his wrath*, but, *it is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed*, ver. 22. When we are in distress, we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what makes for us as well as what makes against us. Things are bad, but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope they may be better. Observe here, 1. The streams of mercy acknowledged, *we are not consumed*. Note, The church of God is like Moses's bush, burning, yet not consumed; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of time. *It is persecuted of men, but not forsaken of God*, and therefore, though it is *cast down*, it is not *destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 9. *corrected, yet not consumed*; refined in the furnace as silver, but not consumed as dross. 2. These streams flowed up to the fountain. *It is of the LORD's mercies*. Here are mercies in the plural number, noting the abundance and variety of those mercies; God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God that *we are not consumed*; others have been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet *we are not consumed*; we are out of the grave, we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our sins, we had been consumed long ago, but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

2. That even in the depth of their affliction they still have experience of the tenderness of the divine pity, and the truth of the divine promise. They had several times complained that God had not pitied, chap. ii. 17—21. but here they corrected themselves, and own, 1. That *God's compassions fail not*; they do not really fail, no not then when in anger he seems to have shut up his tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry: No, *they are new every morning*, *i. e.* every morning we have fresh instances of God's compassion towards us; he visits us with them every morning, Job vii. 18. *every morning doth he bring his judgment to light*, Zeph. iii. 5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. 2. That *great is his faithfulness*. Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they own that it still continues in full force; and though Jerusalem be in ruins, *the truth of the Lord endures for ever*. Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

3. That God is and ever will be the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him and depend upon him to be so, ver. 24. *The Lord is my portion, faith my soul*; that is, 1. When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty and livelihood, and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my

interest in God. Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a *portion for ever*. 2. While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles and make up all my losses. Whatever we are robbed of, our portion is safe. 3. That is that which I depend upon and rest satisfied with; *therefore will I hope in him*: I will stay myself upon him, and encourage myself in him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me. Note, It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of him as our portion, and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations.

4. That those who deal with God will find it is not in vain to trust in him; for, 1. He is good to those that do so, ver. 25. He is good to all, *his tender mercies are over all his works*, all his creatures taste of his goodness, but he is in a particular manner good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God and his gracious returns to us; while we wait for him by faith, we must seek him by prayers; our souls must seek him, else we do not seek so as to find; our seeking will help to keep up our waiting; and to those who thus wait and seek, God will be gracious, he will shew them his marvellous loving-kindness. 2. They that do so will find it good for them, ver. 26. *It is good*; it is our duty, and will be our unspeakable comfort and satisfaction, to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. To hope that it will come, though the difficulties that lie in the way of it seem insupportable; to wait till it doth come, though it be long delayed; and while we wait to be quiet and silent, not quarreling with God, or making ourselves uneasy, but acquiescing in the divine disposals: *Father, thy will be done*. If we call this to mind, we may have hope that all will end well at last.

5. That afflictions are really good for us, and if we bear them aright will work very much for our good. It is not only good to hope and wait for the salvation, but it is good to be under the trouble in the mean time, ver. 27. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*. Many of the young men were carried into captivity, and to make them easy in it, he tells them it was good for them to bear the yoke of that captivity, and they would find it so, if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God's ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God's commands; *it is good for young people to take that yoke upon them in their youth*; we cannot begin too soon to be religious; it will make our duty the more acceptable to God and easy to ourselves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth, it has made them humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been proud and unruly, and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: But when do we bear the yoke so as that it is really good for us to bear it in our youth? He answers in the following verses, 1. When we are sedate and quiet under our affliction; when we sit alone, and keep silence; do not run to and fro into all companies with our complaints, aggravating our calamities; and quarreling with the disposals of providence concerning us, but retire into privacy, that we may in a day of adversity consider; sit alone, that we may converse with God, and commune with our own hearts; silencing all discontented distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who under a very severe trial held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke, as those that have borne it upon us, not wilfully pulled it upon our necks, but patiently submitted to it when God laid it upon us. When those that are afflicted in their youth accommodate themselves to their afflictions, sit their necks to the yoke, and study to answer God's end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to bear it, for it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are thus exercised thereby. 2. When we are humble and patient under our affliction; he gets good by the yoke that puts his mouth into the dust, not only lays his hand on his mouth, in token of submission to the will of God in the affliction, but puts it in the dust, in token of sorrow and shame and self-loathing, as the remembrance of sin, and as one perfectly reduced and reclaimed, and brought as these that are vanquished to lick the dust, *Psaln lxxii. 9.* And we must thus humble ourselves, if so be there may be hope, or as it is in the original, *peradventure there is hope*. If there be any way to acquire and secure a good hope under our afflictions, it is this way, and yet we must be very modest in our expectations of it, must look for it with an *it may be*, as those that own ourselves utterly unworthy of it. Note, Those that are truly humbled for sin will be glad to obtain a good hope, through grace, upon any terms, though they put their mouth in the dust for it; and those that would have hope must do so and ascribe it to free grace if they have any encouragements, which may keep their hearts from sinking into the dust when they put their mouth there. 3. When we are meek and mild towards those that are the instruments of our trouble, and are of a forgiving spirit, ver. 30. He gets good by the yoke that giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, and rather turns the other cheek (*Mat. v. 39.*) than returns the second blow. Our Lord Jesus has left us an example of this, for he gave his back to the smiters, *Ira. l. 6.* He that can bear contempt and reproach, and not render railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness; that when he is filled full with reproach, keeps it to himself, and doth not retort it, and empty it again upon those that filled him with it, but pours it out before the Lord (as those did, *Psaln cxlii. 4.* whose souls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud) he shall find it good to bear the yoke, and that it shall turn to his spiritual advantage. The sum is, *If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that maketh not ashamed*.

6. That God will graciously return to his people with seasonable comforts, according to the time that he has afflicted them, ver. 31, 32. Therefore the sufferer is thus penitent, thus patient, because he believes that God is gracious and merciful, which is the great inducement both to evangelical repentance, and to a Christian patience. We may bear ourselves up with this, 1. That when we are cast down, yet we are not cast off, the father's correcting his son is not a disinheriting of him. 2. That though we may seem to be cast off for a time, while sensible comforts are suspended, and desired salvations deferred, yet we are not really cast off, because not *cast off for ever*; the controversy with us shall not be perpetual. 3. That whatever sorrow we are in, it is what God has allotted us, and his hand is in it: It is he that causeth grief, and therefore we may be assured it is ordered wisely and graciously; and it is but for a season, and when need is, that we are in heaviness, 1 Pet. i. 6. 4. That God has compassions and comforts in store, even for those whom he hath himself grieved; and must be far from thinking that though God cause grief, the world will relieve and help us; no, the very same that caused the grief, must bring in the favour, or we are undone; *una cademque manus vulnus operique tulit*; he hath torn, and he will heal us, *Hos. vi. 1.* 5. That when God returns to deal graciously with us, it will not be according to our merits, but according to his mercies, according to the multitude, the abundance of his mercies. So unworthy we are, that nothing but an abundant mercy will relieve us! and from that what may we not expect? And God's causing our grief ought to be no discouragement at all to those expectations.

7. That when God doth cause grief it is for wise and holy ends, and he

takes not delight in our calamities, *ver. 33.* He doth indeed afflict and grieve the children of men, all their grievances and afflictions are from him, but he doth not do it willingly, not from the heart, so the word is, *i. e.* 1. He never afflicts us but when we give him cause to do it; he doth not dispense his frowns as he doth his favours, *ex mera motu*; if he shew us kindness, it is because *su* it seemeth good unto him; but if he write bitter things against us, it is because we both deserve it and need it. 2. He doth not afflict with pleasure; he delights not in the death of sinners or the disquiet of saints, but punisheth with a kind of reluctance; he comes out of his place to punish, for his place is the mercy-seat; he delights not in the misery of any of his creatures, but for his own people he is so far from it, that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. 3. He retains his kindness for his people even when he afflicts them: If he doth not willingly grieve the children of men, much less his own children; however it be, yet *God is good to them, Psalm lxxiii.* 1. and they by faith see love in his heart, even then when they see frowns in his face and a rod in his hand.

8. That though he makes use of men as his hand, or rather instruments in his hand, for the correcting of his people, yet he is far from being pleased with the injustice of their proceedings, and the wrong they do them, *ver. 34, 35, 36.* Though God serves his own purposes by the violence of wicked and unreasonable men, yet it doth not therefore follow that he countenanceth that violence, as his oppressed people are sometimes tempted to think, *Hab. i. 13. Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously?* Two ways the people of God are injured and oppressed by their enemies, and the prophet here assures us, that God doth not approve of either of them. 1. If men injure them by force of arms, God doth not approve of that: He doth not himself crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth, but he regards the cry of the prisoners; nor doth he approve of men's doing it; nay, he is much displeased with it. It is barbarous to trample on them that are down, and to crush those that are bound, and cannot help themselves. 2. If men injure them under colour of law, and in the pretended administration of justice; if they turn aside the right of a man so that he cannot discover what his rights are, or cannot come at them, they are out of his reach; if they subvert a man in his cause, and bring in a wrong verdict, or give a false judgment; let them know, (1.) That God sees them: It is before the face of the most High, *ver. 35.* it is in his sight, under his eye, and is very displeasing to him; they cannot but know it is so, and therefore it is in defiance of him that they do it: He is the most High, whose authority over them they contemn, by abusing their authority over their subjects; not considering that he that is higher than the highest regardeth, *Ecc. v. 8.* (2.) That God doth not approve of them, more is implied than is expressed; the perverting of justice, and the subverting of the just, is a great affront to God; and though he may make use of this for the correction of his people, yet he will sooner or later severely reckon with those that do thus. Note, However God may for a time suffer evil-doers to prosper, and serve his own purposes by them, yet he doth not therefore approve of their evil-doings. Far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or countenance those that do it.

37. ¶ Who is he that faith, and it cometh to pass, when the LORD commandeth it not? 38. Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good? 39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. 41. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

That we may be entitled to the comforts administered to the afflicted in the foregoing verses, and may taste the sweetness of them, we have here the duties of an afflicted state prescribed to us, in the performance of which we may expect those comforts.

1. We must see and acknowledge the hand of God in all the calamities that befall us at any time, whether personal or public, *ver. 37, 38.* This is here laid down as a great truth which will help to quiet our spirits under our afflictions, and to sanctify them to us. 1. That whatever men's actions are, it is God that over-rules them: *Who is he that faith, and it cometh to pass, i. e.* that designs a thing, and brings his designs to effect, if the Lord commandeth it not? Men can do nothing but according to the counsel of God, nor have any power or success but what is given them from above. *A man's heart deviseth his way, he projects and purposeth, he faith he will do so and so, Jam. iv. 13. but the Lord directeth his steps* far otherwise than he designed them, and what he contrived and expected doth not come to pass, unless it be what God's hand and his counsel had determined before to be done, *Prov. xvi. 9. Jer. x. 23.* The Chaldeans said they would destroy Jerusalem, and it came to pass, not because they said it, but because God commanded it, and commissioned them to do it. Note, Men are but tools which the great God makes use of, and manageth as he pleaseth in the government of this lower world; and they cannot accomplish any of their designs without him. 2. That whatever men's lot is, it is God that orders it: *Out of the mouth of the most High doth not evil and good proceed?* Yes, certainly it doth; and it is more emphatically expressed in the original, *Doth not this evil, and this good, proceed out of the mouth of the most High?* Is it not what he has ordained and appointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the reconciling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they be, this general truth must thus be particularly applied. This comfort I receive from the hand of God, and shall I not receive that evil also, as Job argues, *chap. ii. 10.* Are we healthful or sickly? rich or poor? do we succeed in our designs? or are we crossed in them? it is all what God ordereth; every man's judgment proceedeth from him: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;* he forms the light and creates the darkness as he did at first. Note, All the events of divine providence are the products of a divine counsel; whatever is done God has the directing of it, and the work of his hands agree with the words of his mouth; *he speaks, and it is done;* so easily, so effectually are all his purposes fulfilled!

2. We must not quarrel with God for any affliction that he lays upon us at any time, *ver. 39.* *Wherefore doth a living man complain?* The prophet here seems to check himself for the complaints he had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein he seemed to reflect upon God as unkind and severe. Do I well to be angry? Why do I fret thus? Those who in their haste have chidden with God, must, in the reflection, chide themselves for it. From the doctrine of God's sovereign and universal providence, which he had asserted in the verses before, he draws this inference, *Wherefore doth a living man complain?* What God doth we must not open our mouths against, *Psal. xxxix. 9.* They that blame their lot reproach him that allotted it to them. The sufferers in the captivity must submit to the will of God in all their sufferings. Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before God, we must never exhibit any complaints against God. What!

shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? The reasons here urged are very cogent. 1. We are men, let us herein shew ourselves men. Shall a man complain? and again, a man! We are men and not brutes, reasonable creatures that should act with reason, that should look upwards and look forwards, and both ways may fetch considerations enough to silence our complaints. We are men, and not children that cry for every thing that hurts them; we are men and not gods, subjects, not lords, are not our own masters, nor our own carvers, we are bound and must obey, must submit; we are men and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free from troubles as they are; we are not inhabitants of that world where there is no sorrow, but this where there is nothing but sorrow; we are men and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpless, hopeless state that they are in, but have something to comfort ourselves with which they have not. 2. We are living men; through the good hand of our God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and shall a living man complain? No, he has more reason to be thankful for life, than to complain of any of the burdens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now the living, the living they should praise, and not complain, *Isa. xxxviii. 19.* while there is life there is hope, and therefore instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with hopes that they will be better. 3. We are sinful men, and that which we complain of is the just punishment of our sins; nay, it is far less than our iniquities have deserved; we have little reason to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing, we may thank ourselves, our own wickedness corrects us, *Prov. xix. 3.* no reason to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in it, he is the governor of the world, and it is necessary he should maintain the honour of his government by chastising the disobedient. Are we suffering for our sins? then let us not complain, for we have other work to do, instead of repining we must be repenting; and as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we must be endeavouring to reconcile ourselves to his holy will. Are we punished for our sins? it is our wisdom then to submit and to kiss the rod; for if we still walk contrary to God, he will punish us yet seven times more, for when he judgeth he will overcome; but if we accommodate ourselves to him, though we be chastened of the Lord, we shall not be condemned with the world.

3. We must set ourselves to answer God's intention in afflicting us, which is to bring sin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himself, *ver. 40.* These are the two things which our afflictions should put us upon, 1. A serious consideration of ourselves, and a reflection upon our lives past. *Let us search and try our ways,* search what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good or no; search as for a malefactor in disguise, that flies and hides himself, and then try whether guilty or not guilty: Let conscience be employed both to search and to try, and let it have leave to deal faithfully, to accomplish a diligent search, and to make an impartial trial: *Let us try our ways,* that by them we may try ourselves, for we are to judge of our state, not by our faint wishes but by our steps; not by one particular step, but by our ways; the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableness of the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives to those ends and those rules. When we are in affliction it is seasonable to consider our ways, *Hag. i. 5.* that what is amiss may be repented of, and amended for the future, and so we may answer the intention of the affliction. We are apt in times of public calamity to reflect upon other people's ways, and lay blame upon them, whereas our business is to search and try our own ways, we have work enough to do at home; we must each of us say, What have I done? What have I contributed to the public flames? that we may each of us mend one, and then we should all be mended. 2. A sincere conversion to God; let us turn again to the Lord, to him who is turned against us, and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our Owner and Ruler: We have been with him, and it has never been well with us since we forsook him, let us therefore now turn again to him. This must accompany the former, and be the fruit of it; therefore we must search and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of them to God; this was the method David took, *Psal. cxix. 59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*

4. We must offer up ourselves to God, and our best affections and services, in the flames of devotion, *ver. 41.* When we are in affliction, 1. we must look up to God, as a God in the heavens, infinitely above us, and that has an incontestible dominion over us; for the heavens do rule, and is therefore not to be quarrelled with but submitted to. 2. We must pray to him, with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our lifting up our hands to him; a gesture commonly used in prayer, and sometimes put for it, as, *Psal. cxli. 2. Let the lifting up of my hands be acceptable in thy sight;* it signifies our requesting mercy from him, and our readiness to receive that mercy. 3. Our hearts must go along with our prayers; we must lift up our hearts with our hands, as we must pour out our souls with our words: It is the heart that God looks at in that and every other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God, and deceive ourselves. Praying is lifting up the soul to God, *Psal. xxv. 1. as to our Father in heaven;* and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever, will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way thither, and pressing forward in that way.

42. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned. 43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. 44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. 45. Thou hast made us as the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people. 46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. 47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. 48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. 49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission. 50. Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven. 51. Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city. 52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. 53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. 54. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off.

It is easier to chide ourselves for complaining than to chide ourselves out of it; the prophet had owned that a living man should not complain, as if he checked himself for his complaints in the former part of the chapter, and

and yet here the clouds return after the rain, and the wounds bleed afresh; for great pains must be taken with a troubled spirit to bring it into temper.

(1.) They confess the righteousness of God in afflicting them, ver. 42. *We have transgressed and have rebelled.* Note, It becomes us when we are in trouble to justify God, by owning our sins, and laying the load upon ourselves for them; call sin a transgression, call it a rebellion, and we do not miscall it; this is the result of the searching and trying their ways; the more they inquired into them the worse they found them.

2. Yet they complain of the afflictions they are under, not without some reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but under the sharpest trials must always think and speak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns, and the tokens of his displeasure against them. Their sins were repented of, and yet, ver. 42. *thou hast not pardoned;* they had not the assurance and comfort of the pardon; the judgments brought upon them for their sins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not say the sin was pardoned, which was a mistake, but a common mistake with the people of God when their souls are cast down and disquieted within them. Their case was really piteous, yet they complain, *thou hast not pitied,* ver. 43. Their enemies persecuted and slew them, but that was not the worst of it, they were but the instruments in God's hand; *thou hast persecuted us, and thou hast slain us,* though we expected thou shouldst have protected and delivered us. They complain that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and, 1. This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them; the reflected beams of God's kindness to them used to be the beauty of Israel, but now *thou hast covered us with anger,* so that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be: Or, *thou hast covered us up as men that are buried are covered up and forgotten.* 2. It hindered their prayers from coming up unto God, ver. 44. *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud,* not like that bright cloud in which he took possession of the temple, which enabled the worshippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon mount Sinai, which obliged the people to stand at a distance; this cloud is so thick that our prayers seem as if they were lost in it, they cannot pass through, we cannot obtain an audience. Note, The prolonging of troubles is sometimes a temptation, even to praying people, to question whether God be what they have always believed him to be, a prayer-hearing God.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours, and the reproach and ignominy they were under, ver. 45. *Thou hast made us as the off-scouring, or scrapings of the first floor,* which are thrown to the dunghill. This St. Paul refers to, in his account of the suffering of the apostles, 1 Cor. iv. 13. *We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things.* We are the refuse, or dross in the midst of the people, trodden upon by every body, and looked upon as the vilest of the nations, and good for nothing but to be cast out as filth which has lost its favour. And ver. 46. *Our enemies have opened their mouths against us, have gaped upon us as raring lions, to swallow us up; or made mouths at us; or have taken liberty to say what they please of us; those complaints we had before, chap. ii. 15, 16.* Note, It is common for base and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down those that are fallen into the depths of distress from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themselves by sin; if they had not made themselves vile, their enemies could not have made them so; but therefore men call them reprobate silver, because the Lord has rejected them for rejecting him.

3. They complain of the lamentable destruction that their enemies made of them, ver. 47. *Fear and a snare is come upon us;* the enemies have not only terrified us with those alarms, but prevailed against us by their stratagems, and surprised us with the ambushes they laid for us; and then follows nothing but desolation and destruction, the destruction of the daughter of my people, ver. 48. *of all the daughters of my city,* ver. 51. The enemies have taken some of them like a bird in a snare; chased others as a harmless bird is chased by a bird of prey, ver. 52. *Mine enemies chased me sore like a bird which is beaten from bush to bush,* as Saul hunted David like a partridge. Thus restless was the enmity of their persecutors, and yet causeless; they have done it without cause, without any provocation given them; though God was righteous, they were unrighteous. David often complains of those that hated him without cause, and such are the enemies of Christ and his church, John xv. 25. Their enemies chased them till they had quite prevailed over them, ver. 55. *They have cut off my life in the dungeon.* They have shut up their captives in close and dark prisons, where they are as it were cut off from the land of the living, as ver. 6. or the state and kingdom is sunk and ruined, the life and being of it is gone, and as it were thrown into the dungeon or grave, and a stone cast upon it, such as used to be rolled to the door of the sepulchres. They look upon the Jewish nation as dead and buried, and that there is no possibility of its resurrection. Thus Ezekiel saw it in vision a valley full of dead and dry bones. Their destruction is compared not only to the burying of a dead man, but to the sinking of a living man into the water, who cannot long be a living man there, ver. 54. *Waters of affliction flowed over mine head,* the deluge prevailed and quite overwhelmed them, the Chaldean forces broke in upon them as the breaking forth of waters, which rose so high as to flow over their heads; they could not wade, they could not swim, and therefore must unavoidably sink. Note, The distresses of God's people sometimes prevail to that degree, that they cannot find any footing for their faith, nor keep their head above water, with any comfortable expectation.

4. They complain of their own excessive grief and fear upon this account. 1. The afflicted church is drowned in tears, and the prophet for her, ver. 48, 49. *Mine eye runs down with rivers of water,* so abundant was their weeping! it trickled down, and ceased not; so constant was their weeping! without any intermission, there being no relaxation of their miseries: The distemper was in continual extremity, and they had no better day. It is added, ver. 51. *Mine eye affecteth mine heart;* my seeing eye affects my heart; the more I look upon the desolations of the city and country, the more I am grieved; which way soever I cast mine eye, I see that which renews my sorrow, even because of all the daughters of my city, i. e. all the neighbouring towns, which were as daughters to Jerusalem the mother city. Or, my weeping eye affects my heart; the venture of the grief instead of easing it, did but increase and exasperate it. Or, mine eye melteth my soul, i. e. I have quite wept away my spirits; not only mine eye is consumed with grief, but my soul and my life is spent with it, Psalm xxxi. 9, 10. Great and long grief exhausts the spirits, and brings not only many a grey head, but many a green head too to the grave. I weep, saith the prophet, more than all the daughters of my city, so the margin reads it; he outdid even those of the tender sex in the expressions of grief: and it is no diminution to any to be much in tears for the sins of sinners and the sufferings of saints; our Lord Jesus was so; for when he came near he beheld this same city, and wept over it, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not. 2. She is overwhelmed with fears; not only grieves for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone, ver. 54. *Then I said, I am cut off, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead.* Note, Those that are cast down, are commonly tempted to think themselves cast off, Psalm xxxi. 22, Jonah ii. 4.

5. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, ver. 59. We continue thus weeping till the Lord look down and behold from heaven. This intimates, 1. That they were satisfied God's gracious regard to them in their miseries would be an effectual redress of all their grievances. If God, who now covers himself with a cloud, as if he took no notice of our troubles, (Job xxii. 13.) would but shine forth, all would be well; if he looks upon us, we shall be saved, Psalm lxxx. 19. Dan. ix. 17. As bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights. 2. That they had hopes he would at length look graciously upon them and relieve them; nay, they take it for granted that he will; though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, though we deserve he should. 3. That while they continued weeping they continued waiting; and neither did nor would expect relief and succour from any hand but his; nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes till he look down. Their eyes, which now run down with water, shall still wait upon the Lord their God, until that he have mercy upon them, Psalm cxxiii. 2.

55. ¶ I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. 56. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. 57. Thou drewest near, in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. 58. O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life. 59. O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause. 60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their imaginations against me. 61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, and all their imaginations against me; 62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. 63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their music. 64. Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. 65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger, from under the heavens of the LORD.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope, he complains and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts, and returns again to his complaints, as Psalm xlii. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word and comes off a conqueror, for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. And here are two things with which he comforts himself,

1. His experience of God's goodness even in his affliction. This may refer to the prophet's personal experience, with which he encourageth himself in reference to the public troubles. He that has seasonably succoured particular saints will not fail the church in general. Or it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found it was not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them. 1. He had heard their prayers; though they had been ready to fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their prayers could not pass through, ver. 44. yet upon second thoughts, or at least upon farther trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, seek ye me in vain. When they were in the low dungeon, as free among the dead, they called upon God's name, ver. 55. their weeping did not hinder praying. Note, Though we are cast into never so low a dungeon, we may from thence find a way of access to God in the highest heavens; Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, Psalm cxxx. 1. as Jonah out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon? and would he? Yes, he did. Thou hast heard my voice; and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment, thou didst not hide thine ear at my breathing, at my cry; and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for farther audience, hide not thine ear. God's having heard our voice when we cried to him, even out of the low dungeon, is an encouragement to us to hope that he will not at any time hide his ear. Observe how he calls prayer his breathing; for in prayer we breathe towards God, we breathe after him; though we be but weak in prayer, cannot cry aloud, but only breathe in groanings that cannot be uttered, yet we shall not be neglected if we be sincere. Prayer is the breath of the new man, sucking in the air of mercy in petitions, and returning it in praises; it is both the evidence and the maintenance of the spiritual life: Some read it, at my gasping, when I lay gasping for life, and ready to expire, and though I was breathing my last, then thou tookest cognisance of my distressed case. 2. He had silenced their fears and quieted their spirits, ver. 57. thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; i. e. thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be a distance from me. Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty, we may by faith see him drawing nigh to us in a way of mercy; but this was not all, thou saidst, fear not. This was the language of God's prophets preaching to them not to fear, Isa. xli. 10—13. of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits, that they were his people still, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3. He had already begun to appear for them, ver. 58. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul, that is, as it follows, thou hast redeemed my life, hast rescued that out of the hands of those which would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given me that for a prey. And this is an encouragement to them to hope that he would yet farther appear for them; thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therefore wilt deliver my feet from falling; hast pleaded the causes of my life, and therefore wilt plead my other causes.

2. He comforts himself with an appeal to God's justice, and (in order to the sentence of that) to his omniscience.

1. He appeals to God's knowledge of the matter of fact, how very spiteful and malicious his enemies were, ver. 59. O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong, that I have done no wrong at all, but suffer a great deal. He that knows all things knew, 1. The malice they had against him; thou hast seen all their vengeance; how they desire to do me a mischief, as if it were by way of reprisal for some great injury I had done them. Note, We should consider to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore not allow of those thoughts nor harbour them: and that he knows all the revengeful thoughts others have causelessly in their minds against us, and therefore not to be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them. 2. The designs and projects they had laid to do him a mischief. Thou hast seen all their

their imagination against me, ver. 60. and again, ver. 61. *Thou hast heard all their imagination against me*, both the desire and the device they have to ruin me, whether it shew itself in word or deed, it is known to thee; nay, though the products of it are not to be seen or heard, yet their device against me all the day is perceived and understood by him to whom all things are naked and open. Note, The most secret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church's God, from whom they can hide nothing. 3. The contempt and calumny wherewith they loaded him, all that they spoke slightly of him, and all that they spoke reproachfully: *Thou hast heard their reproach*, ver. 61. all the ill characters they gave me, laying to my charge things that I know not; all the methods they use to make me odious and contemptible, even the *lips of those that rose up against me*, ver. 62. the contumelious language they use whenever they spake of me; and that at their sitting down and rising up, when they lie down at night and get up in the morning, when they sit down to their meat, and with their company, and when they rise from both, still I am their music, they make themselves and one another merry with my miseries, as the Philistines made sport with Samson; Jerusalem was the tabret they played upon: perhaps they had some tune or play, some opera or interlude that was called the destruction of Jerusalem, which though in the nature of a tragedy was very entertaining to those who wished ill to the holy city. Note, God will one day call sinners to an account for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him and his people, *Jude 15*.

2. He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact. *Lord, thou hast seen my wrong*, there is no need of any evidence to prove it, or any persecutor to enforce and aggravate it, thou seest it in its true colours, and now I leave it with thee, *judge thou my cause*, ver. 59. Let them be dealt with, 1. As they deserve, ver. 64. *Render to them a recompense according to the work of their hands*, i. e. Let them be dealt with as they have dealt with us: Let their hand be against them as their hand hath been against us. They have created us a great deal of vexation, now, Lord, *give them sorrow of heart*, ver. 65. perplexity of heart, so some read it, let them be surrounded with threatening mischiefs on all sides, and not be able to see their way out; despondency of heart, so others read it, let them be driven to despair, and give themselves up for gone; God can intangle the head that thinks itself clearest, and sink the heart that thinks itself stoutest. Let them be dealt with according to the threatenings. *Thy curse unto them*, i. e. let thy curse come upon them, all the evils that are pronounced in thy word against the enemies of thy people, ver. 65. They have loaded us with curses, as they loved cursing, so let it come unto them, thy curse which will make them truly miserable: Theirs is causeless, and therefore fruitless; it shall not come, but thine is just, and shall take effect; those whom thou curst are cursed indeed. Let the curse be executed, ver. 66. *Persecute and destroy them in anger*, as they persecute and destroy us in their anger. *Destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord*, let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Destroy them in such a manner as that all that see it may say, it is a destruction from the Almighty, who sits in the heavens and laughs at them, *Psal. ii. 4*. and may own that the heavens do rule, *Dan. iv. 26*. what is said of their idols is now said of their worshippers, who in this also shall be like unto them, *they shall perish from under these heavens*, *Jer. x. 11*. They shall not only be excluded from the happiness of the invisible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of these visible ones; which are the heavens of the Lord, *Psal. cxv. 16*. and which they therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of, that rebel against him.

C H A P. IV.

This chapter is another single alphabet of Lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem, like those in the two first chapters. 1. The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to those that respect used to be shewed to, ver. 1, 2. 2. He laments the direful effects of the famine, which they were reduced to by the siege, ver. 3—10. 3. He laments the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and its amazing desolations, ver. 11, 12. 4. He acknowledgeth that the sins of their leaders were the cause of all these calamities, ver. 13—16. 5. He gives up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were quite too hard for them, ver. 17—20. 6. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites, who triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, ver. 21. 7. He foretells the return of the captivity of Zion at last, ver. 22.

1. **H**OW is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. 2. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! 3. Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. 4. The tongue of the suckling child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. 5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. 6. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. 7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire; 8. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones: it is withered, it is become like a stick. 9. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. 10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. 11. The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. 12. The kings

of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very sad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem: The city that had been as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth, is become dim and is changed, has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was, it is become dross. Alas, what an alteration is here!

1. The temple is laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem and its protection, that is given up into the hands of the enemy. And some understand the gold spoken of, ver. 1. to be the gold of the temple, the fine gold with which it was overlaid, 1 Kings vi. 22. when the temple was burned the gold of it was smoked and sullied, as if it had been of little value, it was thrown among the rubbish, it was changed, i. e. converted to common uses, and made nothing of. The stones of the sanctuary, which were curiously wrought, were thrown down by the Chaldeans, when they demolished it, or were brought down by the force of the fire, and were poured out, and thrown about in the top of every street, they lay mingled without distinction among the common ruins. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned.

2. The princes and priests that were in a special manner the sons of Zion, were trampled upon and abused, ver. 2. Both the house of God and the house of David were in Zion, the sons of both those houses were upon that account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of those two covenants of priesthood, and royalty: they were comparable to fine gold, Israel was more rich in them than in treasures of gold and silver: but now they are esteemed as earthen pitchers; they are broken as earthen pitchers, thrown by as vessels in which there is no pleasure. They are grown poor and brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and despicable, and every one treads upon them and insults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

3. Little children were starved for want of bread and water, ver. 3, 4. The nursing mothers having no meat for themselves, had no milk for the babes at their breast, so that though in disposition they were really compassionate, yet in fact they seemed to be cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness that leave their eggs in the dust, Job xxxix. 14, 15. having no food for their children, they were forced to neglect them, and do what they could to forget them, because it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them; in this they were worse than the seals, or sea-monsters, or whales, as some render it, for they drew out the breast and gave suck to their young, which the daughter of my people will not do. Children cannot shift for themselves as grown people can, and therefore it was the more piteous to see the tongue of the sucking-child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirst, because there was not a drop of water to moisten it: and to hear the young children that could but just speak ask bread of their parents who had none to give them, no nor any friend that could supply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this case, so thankful should our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for ourselves and for our children, and for those of our own house.

4. Persons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, ver. 5. They that were well-born, and well-bred, and had been accustomed to the best both for food and cloathing, that had fed delicately, had every thing that was curious and nice, (they call it eating well, whereas those only eat well that eat to the glory of God) and fared sumptuously every day; they had not only been advanced to the scarlet, but from the beginning were brought up in scarlet, and were never acquainted with any thing mean or ordinary; they were brought up upon scarlet, so the word is, their foot-cloth, and the carpets they walked on were scarlet, yet these being stript of all by the war, are desolate in the streets, have not a house to put their head in, not a bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them, nor fire to warm them. They embrace dunghills, on them they are glad to lie to get a little rest; and perhaps raked in the dunghills for something to eat, as the prodigal son that would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Note, Those who live in the greatest pomp and plenty know not what straits they may be reduced to before they die, as sometimes the needy are raised out of the dunghill, *Psal. cxlii. 7*. so there are instances of the wealthy being brought to the dunghill. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, 1 Sam. ii. 5. It is therefore the wisdom of those that have abundance not to use themselves too nicely, for then hardships when they come will be doubly hard, *Deut. xxviii. 56*.

5. Persons that were eminent for dignity, nay perhaps for sanctity, shared with others in the common calamity, ver. 7, 8. Her Nazarites are extremely changed. Some understand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen that were very clean and neat, and well dressed, washed and perfumed; but I see not why we may not understand it of those devout people among them, that separated themselves to the Lord by the Nazarites vow, *Numb. vi. 2*. That there were such among them in the most degenerate times, appears *Amos ii. 11*. I raised up of your young men for Nazarites; these Nazarites, though they were not to cut the hair, yet by reason of their temperate diet, their frequent washings, and especially the pleasure they had in devoting themselves to God, and conversing with him, which made their faces to shine as Moses's, were purer than snow, and whiter than milk; drinking no wine nor strong drink, they had a most healthful complexion and cheerful countenance than those that regaled themselves daily with the blood of the grape, as Daniel and his fellows were pulse and water. Or, it may note the great respect and veneration which all good people had for them; though perhaps to the eye they had no form or comeliness, yet being separated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been more ruddy than rubies, and their polishing had been of sapphire. But now their visage is marred, as it is said of Christ, *Isai. lii. 14*. it is blacker than a coal, they look miserably, partly through hunger, and partly through grief and perplexity, they are not known in the streets, they that respected them now take no notice of them, and they that had been intimately acquainted with them now scarce knew them, their countenance was so altered by the miseries, that attended the long siege. Their skin cleaves to their bones, their flesh being quite consumed and wasted away; it is withered, it is become like a stick, as dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to be much lamented that even those who are separated to God, yet when desolating judgments are abroad, are many times involved with others in the common calamity.

6. Jerusalem comes down slowly, and dies a lingering death, for the famine contributes more to her destruction than any other judgment whatsoever. Upon this account the destruction of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom, ver. 6. For that was overthrown in a moment, one shower of fire and brimstone dispatched it, no hand stayed on her, she did not endure any long siege, as Jerusalem had done, she fell immediately into the hands of the Lord, who strikes home at a blow, and did not fall into the hands of

man, who being weak, is long in doing execution, *Judges viii. 21.* Jerusalem is kept many months upon the rack in pain and misery, and dies by inches, dies so as to feel herself die. And when the iniquity of Jerusalem is more aggravated than that of Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of it is so. Sodom never had the means of grace that Jerusalem had, the oracles of God, and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jerusalem will be more intolerable than that of Sodom, *Matt. xi. 23, 24.*

The extremity of the famine is here set forth by two frightful instances of it. 1. The tedious death that it was the cause of, *ver. 9.* many were slain with hunger, were famished to death, their stores being spent, and the public stores so near spent, that they could not have any relief out of them; they were stricken through for want of the fruits of the field, they that were starved were as lute to die as if they had been stabbed and stricken through; only their case was much more miserable; they that are slain with the sword are soon rid out of their pain, in a moment they go down to the grave, *Job xxi. 13.* they have not the terror of seeing death make its advances towards them, they scarce feel it when the blow is given; it is but one sharp struggle and the work is done. And if we be ready for another world, we need not be afraid of a short passage to it, the quicker the better. But they that die by famine pine away, hunger preys upon their spirits and wastes them gradually, nay, and it frets their spirits and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are bands in their death, *Plal. lxxiii. 4.* 2. The barbarous murders that it was the occasion of, *ver. 10.* The hands of the pitiful women have first slain and then sodden their own children. This was lamented before, *chap. ii. 20.* and it was a thing to be greatly lamented, that any should be so wicked as to do it, and that they should be brought to such extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long sieges had been threatened in general, *Lev. xxvi. 24. Deut. xxviii. 13.* and particularly against Jerusalem in the siege by the Chaldeans, *Jer. xix. 9. Ezek. v. 10.* The case was sad enough that they had not wherewithal to feed their children, and make meat for them, *ver. 4.* but much worse that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children, and make meat of them; I know not whether to make it an instance of the power of necessity, or of the power of iniquity; but as the Gentile idolaters were justly given up to vile affections, *Rom. i. 26.* so these Jewish idolaters, and the women particularly, who had made cakes to the queen of heaven, and taught their children to do so too, were stripped of natural affection, and that to their own children. Being thus left to dishonour their own nature, was a righteous judgment upon them for the dishonour they had done to God.

7. Jerusalem comes down utterly and wonderfully. 1. The destruction of Jerusalem is a complete destruction, *ver. 11.* The Lord has accomplished his fury, i. e. he has made thorough work of it, has executed all that he purposed in wrath against Jerusalem, and hath remitted no part of the sentence. He hath poured out the full vials of his fierce anger, poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He hath kindled a fire in Zion, which has not only consumed the houses, and levelled them with the ground, but beyond what other fires do, hath devoured the foundations thereof, as if they were to be no more built upon. 2. It is an amazing destruction, *ver. 12.* It was a surprise to the kings of the earth, who are acquainted with and inquisitive about the state of their neighbours; nay, it was so to all the inhabitants of the world that knew Jerusalem, or had ever heard or read of it; they could not have believed that the adversary and enemy should ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem; for, (1.) They knew Jerusalem was strongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and strength of its inhabitants; the strong-hold of Zion was thought to be impregnable. (2.) They knew it was the city of the great King, where the Lord of the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his residence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought it was so much under the divine protection, that it would be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it. (3.) They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled; witness that of Sennacherib: They were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themselves masters of it, and concluded it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jerusalem was given up to them; it was by commission from him that the enemy broke through and entered the gates of Jerusalem.

13. ¶ For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. 14. They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood so that men could not touch their garments. 15. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. 16. The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders. 17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us. 18. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come. 19. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. 20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Here is, 1. The sins they are charged with, for which God brought this destruction upon them, and which serve to justify God in it, *ver. 13, 14.* It is for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests; not that the people were innocent, no, they loved to have it so, *Jer. v. 31.* and it was to please them that the prophets and priests did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them, who should have taught them better, should have reproofed and admonished them, and told them what would be in the end hereof; of the hands of those watchmen who did not give them warning, will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of their priests and prophets. The particular sin charged upon them is persecution, the false prophets and corrupt priests joined their power and interest to shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, i. e. the blood of God's prophets and of those that adhered to them; they not only shed the blood of their innocent children, whom they sacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they sacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the

truth and true religion. This was that sin which the Lord would not pardon, *2 Kings xxiv. 4.* and which brought the last destruction upon Jerusalem, *James v. 6.* Ye have condemned and killed the just. And the priests and prophets were the ringleaders in persecution, as in Christ's time the chief priests and scribes were the men that incensed the people against him; who otherwise would have persisted in their hosannas. Now these are they that wandered as blind men in the streets, *ver. 14.* they strayed from the paths of justice, were blind to every thing that is good; but to do evil they were quick-sighted; God faith of corrupt judges; that they know not, neither do they understand, they walk in darkness, *Psal. lxxxii. 5.* and Christ faith of the corrupt teachers, that they are blind leaders of the blind, *Matt. xv. 14.* They have so polluted themselves with innocent blood, the blood of the saints, that men could not touch their garments, i. e. they made themselves odious to all about them, so that good men were as shy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution; or of touching the bloody clothes of one slain, which tender spirits care not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and priests to be abhorred so much as a spirit of persecution.

2. The testimony of their neighbours produced in evidence against them, both to convict them of sin, and to shew the equity of God's proceedings against them. Some that are grown very impudent in sin boast that they care not what people say of them, but God, by the prophet, would have the Jews to take notice what people said of them, and what was the opinion of the standers by concerning them, *ver. 15, 16.* what they said, nay, what they cried unto them, especially to the corrupt priests and prophets, among the heathen. (1.) They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, Depart ye, it is unclean. You were so precise, you would not touch a Gentile, but cried, Depart, depart, stand by thyself, I am holier than thou, *Isa. lxxv. 5.* Thus the persecutors of Christ would not go into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; but can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you flee away and wander, you will bid them stand off and not touch you, because they are unclean; but in vain, these serpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus, no, they will not respect the persons of the priests, nor favour the elders, the most venerable persons will to them be despicable. (2.) They upbraided them with their sins, and the anger of God against them for their sins, and the direful effects of that anger: They cried unto them, depart ye, it is unclean; they all cried out shame on them, and could easily foresee that God would not long suffer so provoking a people to continue in so good a land. They knew their statutes and judgments were righteous, and expected they should be a wise and understanding people, *Deut. iv. 6.* But when they saw them quite otherwise, they cried, Depart, depart; they soon read their doom, that the land would spue them out, as it had done their predecessors, and when they saw the dispersed of Jacob fleeing and wandering, they told them of it. They said, Now the anger of the Lord hath divided them, has dispersed them into all countries, because they respected not the persons of the priests, the pious priests, that were among them, such as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, Jeremiah, and others; neither did they favour the elders, but despised them and their authority, when they were about to check them for their vicious courses; the very heathen foresaw this would ruin them. (3.) They triumph in their ruin as irrecoverable: They said, when they saw them expelled out of their own land, now they shall no more sojourn there, they have bidden it a final farewell, never more to return it, for God will no more regard them; and how then can they help themselves? Herein they were mistaken, God hath not cast them off for all this; yet thus much is intimated, that all about them observed them to be so very provoking to their God, that there was no reason to expect any other, but that they should be quite abandoned.

3. The despair which they themselves were almost brought to under their calamities. Having heard what they said concerning them among the heathen, let us now hear what they said concerning themselves, *ver. 17.* as for us, we look upon our case to be in a manner helpless: Our end is near, *ver. 18.* the end both of our church and of our state; we are just at the brink of the ruin of both; nay, our end is come, we are utterly undone, a fatal, final period is put to all our comforts, the days of our prosperity are fulfilled, they are numbered and finished. Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies, that the Lord would no more regard them. For, (1.) The refuges they fled to disappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerful ally, but to no purpose, it proved vain help, the succours they expected did not come in, or at least they had not the success they expected; and their eyes failed with looking for that which never came, *ver. 17.* they watched in watching, they watched long, and with a great deal of earnestness and impatience, for a nation that promised them assistance but failed them, and frustrated their expectations; they could not save them, they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army, and therefore retired. Help from creatures is vain help, *Psal. lx. 11.* and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come short of it at last. (2.) The persecutors they fled from overtook them and overcame them; *ver. 18.* They hunt our steps that we cannot go in our streets: when the Chaldeans besieged the city, they raised their batteries so high above the walls that they could command the town, and shoot at people as they went along the streets; they hunted them with their arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven when they fly upon their prey, *ver. 19.* there was no escaping them; they pursued them upon the mountains, and when they thought they had got clear of them, they fell into the hands of those that laid wait for them in the wilderness, to cut off our retreat, and to pick up stragglers: Nay, the king himself, though he may be supposed to have all the advantages the exigence of the case would admit to favour his flight, yet he cannot escape, for divine vengeance pursues him with them. and then, *ver. 20.* The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits. Some apply it to Josiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be understood of Zedekiah, who was the last king of the house of David, and who was pursued by the Chaldeans, and seized in the plains of Jericho, *Jer. xxxix. 5.* He was the anointed of the Lord, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government! he was very much confided in by the Jewish state; they said, under his shadow we shall live among the heathen; they promised themselves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity should, under the protection of his government, yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward. They thought, though they were so reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen, as they had done, yet they might make a shift to live among them, and not to be insulted and pulled to pieces by them. Thus apt are sinking interests, not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jerusalem died of a consumption, a flattering distemper, even when she was ready to expire she formed some hopeful symptoms to herself, and on them grounded a hope that she should recover; but what came of it? The shadow, under which they thought they should live, proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which withered in a night: He that was the anointed of the Lord was taken in their pits, as if he had been

been but a beast of prey; so little account did they make of a person deemed sacred, and not to be violated! Note, When we make any creature the breath of our nostrils, and promise ourselves that we shall live by it, it is just with God to stop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it, for God will have the honour of being himself alone our life and the length of our days.

21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz! the cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked. 22. ¶ The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion: he will no more carry thee away into captivity; he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

David's Psalms of lamentation commonly conclude with some word of comfort, which is as life from the dead, and light shining out of darkness, so doth this lamentation here in this chapter; the people of God are now in great distress, their aspects all doleful, their prospects all frightful, and their ill-natured neighbours the Edomites insult over them, and do all they can to exasperate their destroyers against them; such was their violence against their brother Jacob, *Obad. 10.* such their spleen at Jerusalem, of which they cried, *raise it, raise it, Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* Now it is here foretold, for the encouragements of God's people,

1. That an end shall be put to Zion's troubles, *ver. 22.* The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; not the full of that punishment that it deserves, but of that which God has designed and determined to inflict, and which was necessary to answer the end, the glorifying of God's justice and the taking away of their sin: The captivity which is the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, *Isa. xl. 2.* and he will no longer keep thee in captivity, so it may be read; as well as he will no more carry thee into captivity; he will turn against thy captivity, and work a glorious release for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people shall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were sent.

2. That an end shall be put to Edom's triumphs. It is spoken ironically, *ver. 21.* Rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Edom, go on to insult over Zion in distress, till thou hast filled up the measure of thine iniquity; do so, rejoice in thy own present exemption from the common fate of thy neighbours. This is like Solomon's upbraiding the young man with his ungoverned mirth, *Ecc. vi. 9.* Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; rejoice if thou canst when God comes to reckon with thee, and that he will do ere long; the cup of trembling, when it is now Jerusalem's turn to drink deep of, shall pass through unto thee, it shall go round till it comes to be thy lot to pledge it. Note, This is a good reason why we should not insult over any that are in misery, because we ourselves also are in the body, and we know not how soon their case may be ours: But those who please themselves in the calamities of God's church, must expect to have their doom as aiders and abettors, with them that are instrumental in those calamities. The destruction of the Edomites was foretold by this prophet, *Jer. xlix. 7.* &c. and the people of God must encourage themselves against their present rudeness and insolence with the prospect of it. 1. It will be a shameful destruction; the cup that shall pass unto thee shall intoxicate thee, and that is shame enough to any man; thou shalt be drunken, quite intoxicated, and at thy wit's end, shalt stagger in all thy counsels, and stumble in all thy enterprises, and then, as Noah, when he was drunk, thou shalt make thyself naked, and expose thyself to contempt. Note, Those who ridicule God's people will justly be left to themselves to do that some time or other by which they will be made ridiculous. 2. It will be a righteous destruction, God will herein visit thine iniquity and discover thy sins, he will punish them, and to justify himself therein he will discover them, and make it to appear he has just cause thus to proceed against them. Nay, the punishment of the sin shall so exactly answer the sin, that it shall itself plainly discover it. Sometimes God doth so visit the iniquity, as that he that runs may read the sin in the punishment. But sooner or later sin will be visited and discovered, and all the hidden works of darkness brought to light.

C H A P. V.

This chapter, though it has the same number of verses with the first, second and fourth, yet is not alphabetical as they were, but the scope of it is the same with that of all the foregoing elegies. We have in it, 1. A remonstrance of the present calamitous state of God's people in their captivity, *ver. 1—16.* 2. A protestation of their concern for God's sanctuary, as that which lay nearer their heart than any secular interest of their own, *ver. 17, 18.* 3. A humble supplication to God, and expostulation with him, for the returns of mercy, *ver. 19—22.* for they that lament and do not pray, sin in their lamentations. Some ancient versions call this chapter, The prayer of Jeremiah.

1. REMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. 2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. 3. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. 4. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. 5. Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest. 6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. 7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. 8. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand. 9. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. 10. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine. 11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah. 12. Princes are hanged up by their hand; the faces of elders were not honoured. 13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. 14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. 15. The

joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. 16. The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, that we have sinned!

Is any afflicted? let him pray; and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God, and make known before him his trouble; the people of God do so here; being overwhelmed with grief, they give vent to their sorrows at the footstool of the throne of grace, and so give themselves ease; they complain not of evils feared but of evils felt; Remember what is come upon us, *ver. 1.* what was of old threatened against us, and was long in the coming, it is now at length come upon us, and we are ready to sink under it. Remember what is past, consider and behold what is present, and let not all the trouble we are in seem little to thee, and not worth taking notice of. *Heb. ix. 32.* Note, As it is a great comfort to us, so it ought to be a sufficient one in our troubles, that God sees and considers, and remembers all that is come upon us; and in our prayers we need only to recommend our case to his gracious and compassionate consideration. The one word in which all their grievances are summed up, reproach: Consider, and behold our reproach. The troubles they were in, compared with their former dignity and plenty, were a greater reproach to them, than they would have been to any other people, especially considering their relation to God and dependence upon him, and his former appearances for them; and therefore this they complain of very sensibly, because as it was a reproach it reflected upon the name and honour of that God who had owned them for his people; And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

(1.) They acknowledge the reproach of sin which they bear, the reproach of their youth, which Ephraim bemoans himself for, *Jer. xxxi. 19.* of the early days of their nation; This comes in the midst of their complaints, *ver. 7.* but may well be put in the front of them, Our fathers have sinned, and are not, they are dead and gone, but we have borne their iniquities. This is not here a peevish complaint, or an imputation of unrighteousness to God, like that which we have, *Jer. xxxi. 29.* Ezek. xviii. 2. The fathers did eat sour grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge, and therefore the ways of the Lord are not equal; but it is a penitent confession of the sins of their ancestors, which they themselves also had persisted in, for which they now justly suffered, i. e. the judgments God brought upon them were so very great, that it appeared God had in them an eye to the sins of their ancestors, (because they had been remarkably punished in this world) as well as to their own sins; and thus God was justified both in his connivance at their ancestors, he laid up their iniquity for their children, and in his severity with them, on whom he visited their iniquity, *Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.* Thus they do here, 1. Submit themselves to the divine justice; Lord, thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for we are a seed of evil doers, children of wrath, and heirs of the curse; we are sinful, and we have it by kind. Note, The sins which God looks back upon in punishing, we must look back upon in repenting, and must take notice of all that which will help to justify God in correcting us. 2. They refer themselves to the divine pity; Lord, our fathers have sinned, and we justly smart for their sins; but they are not, they were taken away from the ill to come, they lived not to see and share in these miseries that are come upon us, and we are left to bear their iniquities; now though herein God is righteous, yet it must be owned our case is piteous and worthy of compassion. Note, If we be penitent and patient under what we suffer for the sins of our fathers, we may expect that he that punisheth will pity, and will soon return in mercy to us.

(2.) They represent the reproach of trouble which they bear, in divers particulars, which tend much to their disgrace.

1. They are dispossessed of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got possession of it, *ver. 2.* Canaan was their inheritance, it was theirs by promise, God gave it to them and their seed, and they held it by grant from his crown, *Psalm cxxxvi. 21, 22.* but now it is turned to strangers, they possess it that have no right to it, who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenant of promise, they dwell in the houses that we built, and this is our reproach. It is the happiness of all God's spiritual Israel, that the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be dispossessed of, that shall never be turned to strangers.

2. Their state and nation is brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans, *ver. 3.* We are fatherless, i. e. helpless, we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us: Our king, who is the father of the country, is cut off; nay, God our father seems to have forsaken us and cast us off: Our mothers, our cities, that were as fruitful mothers in Israel, are now as widows, are wives whose husbands are dead, destitute of comfort, and exposed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure are now looked on with contempt.

3. They are put hard to it to provide necessities for themselves and their families, whereas, the time was when they lived in abundance, and had plenty of every thing. Water used to be free and easily come by, but now, *ver. 4.* We have drunk our water for money, and the saying is no longer true, *Usus communis aquarum.* So hardly did their oppressors use them, that they could not have a draught of fair water but they must purchase it either with money or work! Formerly they had fuel too for the felling, but now our wood is sold to us, and we pay dear for every faggot, Now were they punished for employing their children to gather wood for fire, with which to bake cakes for the queen of heaven, *Jer. vii. 18.* They were perfectly proscribed by their oppressors, were forbidden the use both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, *Interdico tibi aqua & igni.* But what must they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come by as any thing, for, 1. Some of them sold their liberty for it, *ver. 6.* We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians; have made the best bargain we could with them, to serve them, that we might be satisfied with bread. We were glad to submit to the meanest employment upon the hardest terms to get a sorry livelihood; we have yielded ourselves to be their vassals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh in the years of famine, that we might have something for ourselves and families to subsist on. The neighbour nations used to trade with Judah for wheat, *Ezek. xxvii. 17.* for it was a fruitful land, but now it cuts up the inhabitants, and they are glad to make court to the Egyptians and Assyrians. 2. Others of them ventured their lives for it, *ver. 9.* We got our bread with the peril of our lives; when being straitened by the siege, and all provisions cut off, they either sallied or stole out of the city, to fetch in some supply, they were in danger of falling into the hand of the besiegers, and being put to the sword, the sword of the wilderness it is called, or, of the plain, for so the word signifies, the besiegers lying dispersed every where in the plains that were about the city. Let us take occasion from hence to bless God for the plenty that we enjoy, that we get our bread so easily, scarce with the sweat of our face, much less with the peril of our lives; and for the peace we enjoy, that we can go out and enjoy not only the necessary products, but the pleasures of the country, without any fear of the sword of the wilderness.

4. They are brought into slavery who were a free people, and not only their own masters but masters of all about them, and this is as much as any

any thing their reproach, *ver. 5. Our necks are under the grievous and intolerable yoke of persecution*, the iron yoke which Jeremiah foretold should be laid upon them, *Jer. xxviii. 14.* we are used like beasts in the yoke, that wholly serve their owners, and are at the command of their drivers. That which aggravated the servitude was, 1. That their labours were incessant like those of Israel in Egypt, that were daily talked, nay overtaken; *we labour and have no rest*, neither leave nor leisure to rest. The oxen in the yoke are unyoked at night and have rest, so they have, by a particular provision of the law, on the sabbath-day; but the poor captives in Babylon, that were compelled to work for their living, *laboured and had no rest*, no night's rest, no sabbath rest, they were quite tired out with continual toil. 2. That their masters were insufferable, *ver. 8. Servants have ruled over us*, and nothing more vexations than a *servant when he reigneth*, *Prov. xxx. 22.* They were not only the great men of the Chaldeans that commanded them, but even the meanest of their servants abused them at pleasure, and insulted over them: and they must be at their beck too. The curse of Canaan is now become the doom of Judah, *a servant of servants shall he be*. They would not be ruled by their God, and by his servants the prophets, whose rule was gentle and gracious, and therefore justly are they ruled with rigour by their enemies and their servants. 3. That they saw no probable way for the redress of their grievances; *there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand*, not only none to release us out of our captivity, but none to check and restrain the insolence of the servants that abuse us and trample upon us, which one would think their masters should have done, because it was an usurpation of their authority; but it should seem they connived at it and encouraged it, and as if they were not worthy of the correction of gentlemen, they are turned over to the footmen to be kicked. Well might they pray, *Lord, consider, and behold our reproach*.

5. They that used to be feasted are now famished, *ver. 10. Our skin was black like an oven, dried and parched too, because of the terrible famine, the storms of famine*, so the word is; for though famine comes gradually upon a people, yet it comes violently, and bears down all before it, and there is no resisting it; and this is their disgrace; hence we read of the *reproach of famine*, which in captivity they received among the heathen, *Ezek. xxxvi. 30.*

6. All sorts of people, even they whole persons and characters were most inviolable, were abused and dishonoured. The women were ravished, even the women in Zion, that holy mountain, *ver. 11.* The committing of such abominable wickednesses there is very justly and sadly complained of. 2. The great men were not only put to death, but put to ignominious deaths; *princes were hanged as if they had been slaves, by the hands of the Chaldeans, ver. 12.* they took a pride in doing this barbarous execution with their own hands. Some think the dead bodies of the princes after they were slain with the sword, were hung up as the bodies of Saul's sons, in disgrace to them, and as it were to expiate the nations guilt. 3. No respect was shewed to magistrates and those in authority; *the faces of elders, elders in age, elders in office, were not honoured*; this will be particularly remembered against the Chaldeans another day, *Iju. xlvii. 6. Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke*. 4. The tenderness of youth was no more considered than the gravity of old age, *ver. 13. They took the young men to grind at the hand-mills*, nay, perhaps at the horse-mills; *the young men have carried the grist, so some; have carried the mill, or mill-stones*, so others: they loaded them as if they had been beasts of burden, and so broke their backs when they were young, and made the rest of their lives the more miserable: Nay, they made the little children carry their wood home for fuel, and laid such burdens upon them that they fell down under them. So very inhuman were these cruel task-masters!

7. An end was put to all their gladness, and their joy quite extinguished, *ver. 14. The young men that used to be disposed to mirth have ceased from their music*, have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It doth indeed well become old men to cease from their music, it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt, when *all the daughters of music are brought low*; but it speaks some great calamity upon a people when their young men are made to cease from it. It was so with the body of the people, *ver. 15. The joy of their heart was ceased*, they never knew what joy was since the enemy came in upon them like a flood, for ever since deep has called unto deep, and one wave has flowed in upon the neck of another, so that we are quite overwhelmed; *our dance is turned into mourning*, instead of leaping for joy, as formerly, we sink and lie down in sorrow. This may refer especially to the joy of their solemn feasts, and the dancing used in them, (*Jud. xxi. 21.* which was not only modest but sacred dancing, this was turned into mourning, which was doubled on their festival days, in remembrance of their former pleasant things).

8. An end was put to all their glory. 1. The public administration of justice was their glory, but that was gone; *the elders have ceased from the gate, ver. 14.* the course of justice which used to run down like a river is now stopped; the courts of justice that used to be kept with so much solemnity are put down; for the judges are slain and carried captives. 2. The royal dignity was their glory, but that also was gone; *the crown is fallen from our head*; not only the king himself fallen into disgrace, but the crown; he has no successor; the regalia are all lost. Note, Earthly crowns are fading falling things; but, blessed be God, there is a crown of glory that fades not away, that never falls; *a kingdom that cannot be moved*. Upon this complaint, but with reference to all the foregoing complaints, they make their penitent acknowledgment, *Woe unto us that we have sinned!* Alas for us! our case is very deplorable, and it is all along of ourselves we are undone, and, which aggravates the matter, we are undone by our own hands; God is righteous, for *we have sinned*. Note, All our woes are owing to our own sin and folly. If the crown of our head be fallen (for so the words run) if we lose our excellency, and become mean, we may thank ourselves, we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown and laid our honour in the dust.

17. For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim. 18. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it. 19. Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation. 20. Wherefore dost thou forget

us for ever, and forsake us so long time? 21. Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. 22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

Here, 1. The people of God express a deep concern they had for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities; the interests of God's house lay nearer their hearts than those of their own, *ver. 17, 18. For this our heart is faint*, and sinks under the load of its own heaviness, *for these things our eyes are dim* and our sight is gone, as is usual in a deliquium, or fainting fit: It is *because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate*, the holy mountain, and the temple built upon that mountain: For other desolations our hearts grieve, and our eyes weep, but for this our hearts faint, and our eyes are dim. Note, Nothing lies so heavy upon the spirits of good people, as that which threatens the ruin of religion, or weakens the interests of that; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to God that that afflicts us more than any temporal affliction to ourselves. The people had polluted the mountain of Zion with their sins, and therefore God has justly made it desolate, to that degree, that *the foxes walk upon it*, as freely and commonly as they do in the woods. It is sad indeed when the mountain of Zion is become a portion for foxes, *Psal. lxxiii. 10.* but sin had first made it so, *Ezek. xlii. 4.*

2. They comfort themselves with the doctrine of God's eternity, and the perpetuity of his government, *ver. 19. But thou, O Lord, remainest for ever*. This they are taught to do by that Psalm which is entitled, *A prayer of the afflicted*, *Psal. cii. 27, 28.* When all our creature-comforts are removed from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then encourage ourselves with the belief. 1. Of God's eternity; *Thou remainest for ever*; what shakes the world gives no disturbance to him that made it; whatever revolutions there are on earth, there is no change in the eternal mind; God is still the same, and remains for ever infinitely wise and holy, just and good; with him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. 3. Of the never-failing continuance of his dominion; *Thy throne is from generation to generation*; the throne of glory, the throne of grace, and the throne of government, are all unchangeable, immovable; and this is matter of comfort to us when *the crown is fallen from our head*. When the thrones of princes, that should be our protectors, are brought to the dust, and buried in it, God's throne continues still; he still rules the world, and rules it for the good of his church: The Lord reigns, reigns for ever, even *thy God, O Zion*.

3. They humbly expostulate with God concerning the low condition they were now in, and the frowns of heaven they were now under, *ver. 20. Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever*, as if we were quite cast out of mind? *Wherefore dost thou forsake us so long a time*, as if we were quite deprived of the tokens of thy presence? Wherefore dost thou deter our deliverance, as if thou hadst utterly abandoned us? Thou art the same, and though the throne of thy sanctuary is demolished, thy throne in heaven is unshaken. But wilt thou not be the same to us? Not as if they thought God had forgotten and forsaken them, much less feared his forgetting and forsaken them for ever: but thus they express the value they had for his favour and presence, which they thought it long that they were deprived of the evidence and comfort of. The last verse may be read as such an expostulation, and so the margin reads it, *For wilt thou utterly reject us? wilt thou be perpetually wroth with us?* not only not smile upon us, and remember us in mercy, but frown upon us, and lay us under the tokens of thy wrath: not only not draw nigh to us, but cast us out of thy presence, and forbid us to draw nigh unto thee: How will this be reconciled with thy goodness and faithfulness, and the stability of thy covenant? We read it, *But thou hast rejected us*, i. e. thou hast given us cause to fear that thou hast: Lord, how long shall we be in this temptation? Note, Though we may not quarrel with God, yet we may plead with God; and though we may not conclude that he has cut us off, yet we may with the prophet, *Jer. xii. 1.* humbly reason with him concerning his judgments, especially the continuance of the desolations of his sanctuary.

4. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace; Lord, do not reject us for ever, but turn thou us unto thee, renew our days, *ver. 21.* These words, though they be not put last, yet the Rabbins, because they would not have the book to conclude with these melancholy words, *ver. 22.* repeat this prayer again, that the sun may not set under a cloud, and so make these the last words, both in writing and reading this chapter. They here pray, 1. For converting grace, to prepare and qualify them for mercy: *Turn us to thee, O Lord*. They had complained that God had forsaken and forgotten them, and then their prayer is not, *Turn thou to us*, but *Turn us to thee*; which implies an acknowledgment that the cause of their distance was in themselves. God never leaves any till they first leave him, nor stands afar off from any longer than while they stand afar off from him; if therefore he turn them to him in a way of duty, no doubt but he will presently return to them in a way of mercy. This agrees with that repeated prayer, *Psal. lxxx. 3—7—19. Turn us again, and then cause thy face to shine: Turn us from our idols to thyself, by a sincere repentance and reformation, and then we shall be turned*. This implies a farther acknowledgment of their own weakness and inability to turn themselves. There is in our nature a bent to backslide from God, but no disposition to return to him till his grace works in us both *to will and to do*. So necessary is that grace, that we may truly say, *Turn us, or we shall not be turned*, but shall wander endlessly; and so powerful and effectual is that grace, that we may as truly say, *Turn us, and we shall be turned*; for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God's people are made a *willing people*, *Psal. cx. 3.* 2. For restoring mercy, *Turn us to thee*, and then *renew our days as of old*, i. e. put us into the same happy state that our ancestors were in along ago, and that they continued long in; let it be with us as it was at the first, and at the beginning, *Isa. i. 26.* Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favour renew our days, so that we shall renew our youth as the eagle, *Psal. ciii. 5.* They that repent and do their first works, shall rejoice and recover their first comforts. God's mercies to his people have been, *ever of old*, *Psal. xxv. 6.* and therefore they may hope, even then when he seems to have forsaken and forgotten them, that the mercy which was from everlasting will be to everlasting.

A N
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
Upon the Book of the PROPHET
E Z E K I E L.

When we entered upon the writings of the Prophets, which speak of the things that should be hereafter, methought we had the same call given us that St. John had, *Rev. iv. 1. Come up hither*; but when we enter upon the prophecy of this book, methinks we are called to *Come up hither*, as we go forward in time: for Ezekiel prophesied in the captivity, as Jeremiah prophesied just before it; so we soar upward in discoveries yet more sublime of the divine glory. These waters of the sanctuary still grow deeper, so far from being fordable, that in some places they are scarce fathomable; yet, as deep as they are, out of them flow streams which *make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High*. As to this prophecy now before us we may enquire, (1.) Concerning the penman of it, it was Ezekiel, his name signifies, *The strength of God*; or one *girt or strengthened of God*. He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said (and no doubt did as he said) *I have made thy face strong against their faces*.—The learned Selden, in his book *De Diis Syris*, saith, it was the opinion of some of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the same with that Nazaratus Assyrius, whom Pythagoras (as himself relates) had for his tutor for some time, and whose lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the same time. And we have reason to think that many of the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred writings, and borrowed some of the best of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reproving them; that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian saith he was put to death, and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem the son of Noah. So Hottinger relates, *Thesaur. Philol. lib. ii. cap. 1.*

(2.) Concerning the date of it, the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a *house of bondage to the Israel of God*; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself and the people to whom he prophesied were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament that lived and prophesied any where but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophecy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel at the latter end of it; it was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them when in the beginning of their troubles they were secure and unhumiliated, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them when in the latter end of their troubles they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.

(3.) Concerning the matter and scope of it; 1. There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood; especially in the beginning and the latter end of it; which therefore the Jewish rabbins forbade the reading of to their young men, till they came to be thirty years of age, lest by the difficulties they met with there they should be prejudiced against the Scriptures; but if we read these difficult parts of Scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to untie all the knots we meet with, no more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may from them, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope in the God we worship. 2. Though the visions here be intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is to *show God's people their transgressions*, that in their captivity they might be repenting and not repining. It should seem he was constantly attended, for we read of their *sitting before him as God's people* *jut to hear his words*, chap. xxxiii. 31. and that he was occasionally consulted, for we read of the elders of Israel that came to *enquire of the Lord* by him, chap. xiv. 1—3. And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors that ridiculed it and them. 3. Though the reproofs here and the threatenings be very sharp and bold, yet towards the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom indeed this prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets. But by opening the *terrors of the Lord* he prepares Christ's way; by the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our *school-master to bring us to Christ*. The visions, which were the prophets credentials, we have, chap. i—3. the reproofs and threatenings, chap. iv—xxiv. and betwixt the comforts we have in the latter part of the book, we have messages sent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Israel, whose destruction is foretold, chap. xxv—xxxv. to make way for the restoration of God's Israel, and the re-establishment of their city and temple, which are foretold chap. xxxvi. *ad finem*. And those who would apply the comforts to themselves, must apply the convictions to themselves.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. The common circumstances of the prophecy now to be delivered, the time when it was delivered, ver. 1. the place where, ver. 2. and the person by whom, ver. 3. 2. The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God; (1.) In his attendance and retinue in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called living-creatures, ver. 4—14. (2.) In his providences concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels and their motions, ver. 15—26. (3.) In the face of Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne, ver. 26—28. And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will divine revelation have upon us, and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, which is the thing aimed at in prefacing the prophecies of this book with these visions. *When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not.*

1. NOW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, (as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar,) that the heavens were opened, and I saw the visions of God. 2. In the fifth day of the month, (which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.) 3. The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very particularly set

down, that the narrative may appear to be authentic and not romantic. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the return of the day, and our return to the place of the altar, Gen. xiii. 4. may revive the pleasing grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. Remember, O my soul, and never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place: tell others what God did for thee.

1. The time when Ezekiel had this vision is here recorded. It was in the thirtieth year, ver. 1. Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest he was at that age to enter upon the full execution of the priestly office, but being debarred from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a new computation of time, as they had done from Nabonassar 123 years before. Nabopolassar reigned 19 years, and this was the 11th of his son, which makes the 30. And it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards useth the melancholy computation of his own country, observing, ver. 2. that it was the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee paraphrase fixes upon another Era, and saith this was the 30th year after Hilkiiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight, after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king. And it is true, that this was just 30 years from thence; and that was an event so remarkable, as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial, that it was proper enough to date from it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of 30 years, as having an eye both to that event and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident.

It was in the fourth month, answering to our June, and in the fifth day of the month, that Ezekiel had this vision, ver. 2. It is probable it was on the sabbath-day, because we read, chap. iii. 16. that at the end of seven days, which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus John was in the spirit on the Lord's day, when he saw the visions of the Almighty, Rev. i. 10. God would hereby put

put an honour upon his sabbath, then when the enemies mocked at them, Lam. i. 7. And he could here thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets every sabbath-day, by the extraordinary manner of his appearance on some sabbath days.

2. The holy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and the blessing of his people with this vision. He was in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. Observe,

(1.) The people of God were now, some of them, captives in the land of the Chaldeans: The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best; for in Jeremiah's vision these were the good figs whom God had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5. and, that it might be for their good, God raised up a prophet among them, to teach them out of the law, then when he chastened them, Psal. cxiv. 12. Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and in concurrence with each other; the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, if he have but his ear open to discipline, Job xxxiii. 23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, was for mocking his messengers and misusing his prophets; and yet when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with his tormented mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be hankered in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, It was in the fifth year of the captivity that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord, and to complain that they saw not their signs, and there was none to tell them how long, Psal. lxxiv. 9. and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews that remained in their own land had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them, for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them.

(2.) The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by the river Chebar, for it was by the rivers of Babylon that they sat down, and on the willow trees by the river's side they hung their harps, Psal. cxxxvii. 2. The planters in America keep along by the sides of the rivers, and perhaps those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country by the rivers sides that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore chose to fix them by the sides of the rivers, that the goods they made might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but among the captives by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive.

Observe here, 1. That the best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the public and national judgments that are inflicted for sin; they feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt; by which it appears, that the difference between good and bad ariseth not from the events that are concerning them, but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men but prophets share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer from thence with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state. 2. Words of conviction counsel, and comfort, come best to those that are in affliction from their fellow-sufferers. The captives will be best instructed by one that is a captive among them, and experimentally knows their sorrows. 3. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of divine revelations were revealed in the land of the Chaldeans, which was a happy preface of the carrying of the church, with that divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world: and as now, so afterwards, when the gospel kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God. 4. Wherever we are we may keep up our communion with God, for from the remotest corners of the earth we may find a way open heavenward: Undique ad caelos tantum est via. 5. When God's ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound, 2 Tim. ii. 9. When St. Paul was a prisoner, yet the gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the isle of Patmos, Christ visited him there; nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favourites, and their consolations have much more abounded than when affliction has abounded, 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. The discovery which God was pleased to make of himself to the prophet, then when he was in these circumstances, to be by him communicated to his people. He here tells us what he saw, what he heard, and what he felt.

(1.) He saw visions of God, ver. 1. No man can see God and live, but many have seen visions of God, such displays of the divine glory as have both instructed and affected them; and commonly when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah, chap. vi. to Jeremiah, chap. i. to Abraham, Acts vii. 2. to settle a correspondence and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so as that there needed not afterwards a vision upon every revelation. Ezekiel was employed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God. Note, It concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the visions of God the heavens were opened; the darkness and distance which hindered his visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world, as near and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

(2.) He heard the voice of God, ver. 3. The word of the Lord came expressly to him, and what he saw was designed to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expression is emphatical, *Effendo fuit verbum Dei*; The word of the Lord was as really it was to him, there was no mistake in it; it came to him in the fulness of its light and power, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; it came close to him, nay it came into him, took possession of him, and dwelt in him richly: It came expressly, or accurately to him; he did himself clearly understand what he said, and was abundantly satisfied of the truth of it. The essential word (so we may take it) the word who is, who is what he is, came to Ezekiel, to send him on his errand.

(3.) He felt the power of God opening his eyes to see the visions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both. The hand of the Lord was there upon him. Note, The hand of the Lord goes along with the word of the Lord, and so it becomes effectual; those only understand and believe the report, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. The hand of God was upon him, as upon Moses, to cover him, that he should not

be overcome by the dazzling light and lustre of the visions he saw, Exod. xxxiii. 22. It was upon him, as upon St. John, Rev. i. 17. to revive and support him, that he might bear up and not faint under these discoveries: That he might neither be lifted up nor cast down with the abundance of the revelations, God's grace is sufficient for him, and in token of that his hand is upon him.

4. ¶ And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. 6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7. And their feet were straight feet; the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. 10. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. 11. Thus were their faces; and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. 12. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. 13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures: and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The vision of God which Ezekiel here saw were very glorious, and had more particulars than those which other prophets saw. The scope and intentions of these visions is,

1. To possess the prophet's mind with very great, and high, and honourable thoughts of that God, by whom he was commissioned, and for whom he was employed. It is the likeness of the glory of the Lord that he sees, ver. 28. and from hence he may infer, it is his honour to serve him, for he is one whom angels serve; he may serve him with safety, for he hath power sufficient to bear him out in his work; it is at his peril to draw back from his service, for he hath power to pursue him, as he did Jonah; so great a God as this must be served with reverence and godly fear; and with assurance may Ezekiel foretell what this God will do, for he is able to make his words good.

2. To strike a terror upon the sinners that remained in Zion, and those that were already come to Babylon, who were secure, and bid defiance to the threatenings of Jerusalem's ruin, as we have found in Jeremiah's prophecy, and shall find in this many did: Let those who said, we shall have peace, though we go on, know, that our God is a consuming fire, whom they cannot stand before. That this vision had a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem seems plain from chap. xliii. 3. where he saith, it was the vision which he saw when he came to destroy the city, i. e. to prophesy the destruction of it.

3. To speak comfort to those that feared God, and trembled at his word, and humbled themselves under his mighty hand; let them know, that though they are captives in Babylon, yet they have God nigh unto them; though they have not the place of the sanctuary to be their glorious high throne, they have the God of the sanctuary. Dr. Lightfoot observes, "That now the church is to be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord shews a glory in the midst of them, as he had done at their first constituting into a church in the wilderness, and out of a cloud and fire, as he had done there, he shewed himself, and from between living creatures, as from between the cherubims, he gives the oracles." This put an honour upon them, by which they might value themselves when the Chaldeans insulted over them; and this might encourage their hopes of deliverance in due time.

Now to answer these ends, we have in these verses the first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word; which speaks him great; as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a splendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command, which engageth his allies to trust in him, and his enemies to fear him.

(1.) The introduction to this vision of the angels is very magnificent and awakening, ver. 4. The prophet observing the heavens to open, looked, looked up, as it was time, to see what discoveries God would make to him. Note, When the heavens are opened, it concerns us to have our eyes open. And to clear the way, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, which would drive away the interposing mists of this lower region; fair weather uses to come out of the north, and thence the wind comes that drives away rain; God can by a whirlwind clear the sky and air, and produce that serenity of mind which is necessary to our communion with heaven. Yet this whirlwind was attended with a great cloud; when we think the clouds that arise from this earth are dispelled, and we can see beyond them, yet still there is a cloud which heavenly things are wrapt in, a cloud from above, so that we cannot order our speech concerning them by reason of darkness. Christ here descended as he ascended in a cloud. Some by this whirlwind and cloud understand the Chaldean army coming out of the north against the land of Judah, bearing down all before them as a tempest, and so it agrees with that which was signified by one of the first of Jeremiah's visions, Jer. i. 14. Out of the north an evil shall break forth; but I take it here as an introduction rather to the vision than to the sermons. This whirlwind came to Ezekiel, as that to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 11. to prepare the way of the Lord, and to demand attention; He that has eyes, that has ears, let him see, let him hear.

(2.) The vision itself. A great cloud was the vehicle of this vision, in which it was conveyed to the prophet; for God's pavilion in which he rests, his chariot in which he rides, is darkness and thick clouds, Psalm xviii. 11. civ. 3. thus he holds back the face of his throne, lest its dazzling light and lustre should overpower us, by spreading a cloud upon it. Now,

1. The cloud is accompanied with a fire, as upon mount Sinai, where God resided in a thick cloud, but the sight of his glory was like devouring fire, Exod. xxiv. 16, 17. and his first appearance to Moses was in a flame of fire in the bush; for our God is a consuming fire: This was a fire infolding itself; a globe, or orb, or wheel of fire; God being his own cause, his own rule, and his own end, if he be as a fire, he is a fire infolding itself, or as some read it, kindled by itself. The fire of God's glory shines forth, but it presently catcheth itself, for he lets us know but part of his ways; the fire of God's wrath breaks forth, but presently catcheth itself, and the divine patience suffers not all his wrath to be stirred up. If it were not a fire thus infolding itself, O Lord, who shall stand?

2. The fire is surrounded with a glory; a brightness was about it, in which it infolded itself, yet it made some discovery of itself; though we cannot see into the fire, cannot by searching find out God to perfection, yet we see the brightness that is round about it, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moses might see God's back-parts; but not his face; we have some light concerning the nature of God from the brightness which encompasseth it, though we have not an insight into it, by reason of the cloud spread upon it. Nothing more easy than to determine that God is; nothing more difficult than to describe what he is. When God displays his wrath as a fire, yet there is a brightness about it; for his holiness and justice appear very illustrious in the punishment of sin and sinners; Even about the devouring fire there is a brightness, which glorified saints will for ever admire.

3. Out of this fire there shines the colour of amber; we are not told who or what it was that had this colour of amber, and therefore I take it to be the whole frame of the following vision, which came into Ezekiel's view out of the midst of the fire and brightness; and the first thing he took notice of before he viewed the particulars was, that it was of the colour of amber, or the eye of amber, i. e. it looked as amber cloth to the eye, of a bright flaming fiery colour, the colour of a burning coal, so some think it should be read. The living creatures which he saw coming out of the midst of the fire, were seraphims, burners, for he maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire.

4. That which comes out of the fire, of a fiery amber colour, when it comes to be distinctly viewed, is the likeness of four living creatures; not the living creatures themselves, angels are spirits, and cannot be seen, but the likenesses of them, such a hieroglyphic or representation as God saw fit to make use of for the leading of the prophet, and us with him, into some acquaintance with the world of angels (a matter purely of divine revelation) so far as is requisite to possess us with an awful sense of the greatness of that God who hath angels for his attendants, and the goodness of that God who hath appointed them to be attendants on his people. The likenesses of these living creatures came out of the midst of the fire, for angels derive their being and power from God; they are in themselves, and are to us what he is pleased to make them; their glory is a ray of his. The prophet himself explains this vision, chap. x. 20. I know that the living creatures were the cherubims, which is one of the names by which the angels are known in Scripture. To Daniel was made known their numbers, ten thousand times ten thousand, Dan. vii. 10. But though there are many, yet they are one, and that is made known to Ezekiel here; they are one in nature and operation, as an army consisting of thousands, is yet called a body of men. We have here an account of, (1.) Their nature, they are living creatures, they are the creatures of God, the work of his hands, their being is derived, they have not life in and of themselves, but receive it from him who is the fountain of life. As much as the living creatures of this lower world excel the vegetables that are the ornaments of the earth, so much do the angels, the living creatures of the upper world, excel the sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments of the heavens. The sun, say some, is a flame of fire infolding itself, but it is not a living creature, as angels, those flames of fire are. Angels are living wights, living beings, emphatically so; men on earth are dying creatures, dying daily, in the midst of life we are in death, but angels in heaven are living creatures, they live indeed, live to good purpose, and when saints come to be equal unto the angels, they shall not die any more, Luke xx. 36.

(2.) Their number, they are four, so they appear here though they are innumerable, not as if these were four particular angels let up above the rest, as some have fondly imagined, Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, but for the sake of the four faces they put on, and to insinuate their being sent forth towards the four winds of heaven, Matt. xxiv. 31. and Zechariah sees them as four chariots going forth, east, west, north, and south, Zech. vi. 1. God has messengers to send each way, for his kingdom is universal, and reacheth to all parts of the world.

(3.) Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the service of their Maker and Master. These are set forth figuratively and by similitude, as is proper in visions, which are parables to the eye. Their description here is such, and so expressed, as that, I think, it is not possible by it to form an exact idea of them in our fancies, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worship them; but the several instances of their fitness for the worship they are employed in, are intended in the several parts of this description. Note, It is the greatest honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of answering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work, the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

These living creatures are described here,

1. By their general appearance, they had the likeness of a man, they appeared for the main in a human shape, 1. To signify that these living creatures are reasonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that spirit of a man which is the candle of the Lord. 2. To put an honour upon the nature of man, who is made the lower, yet but a little lower than the angels, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the invisible intelligences of the upper world would make themselves visible, it is in the likeness of man. 3. To intimate that their delights are with the sons of men, as their masters are, Prov. viii. 31. that they do service to men, and men may have a spiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and holy love. 4. The angels of God appear in the likeness of man, because in the fulness of time the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeness, but to assume that nature; they therefore shew this love to it.

2. By their faces, every one had four faces, looking four several ways. In St. John's vision, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of the faces here mentioned, Rev. iv. 7. here each of them has all four, to intimate, that they have all the same qualifications for service, though, perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, some excel in one gift, and others in another, but all for the common service. Let us contemplate their faces till we be in some measure changed into the same image, that we may do the will of God as the angels do it in heaven. They all four had the face of a man, for in that likeness they appeared, ver. 5. but, besides that, they had the

face of a lion, an ox, and an eagle, each masterly in their kind; the lion among wild beasts, the ox among tame ones, and the eagle among fowls, ver. 10. Doth God make use of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies; they are fierce and strong as the lion and the eagle in tearing their prey: Doth he make use of them for the good of his people? they are as oxen strong for labour, and inclined to serve. And in both they have the understanding of a man. The scattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels of heaven: They have the likeness of a man; but because there are some things in which man is excelled even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to some of them; they have the understanding of a man, and such as far exceeds it; they also resemble man in tenderness and humanity; but, 1. A lion excels a man in strength and boldness, and is much more formidable, therefore the angels, who do so too, put on the face of a lion. 2. An ox excels man in diligence and patience, and pains-taking, and an unwearied discharge of the work he has to do; therefore the angels, who are constantly employed in the service of God and the church, put on the face of an ox. 3. An eagle excels man in quickness and piercingness of sight, and in soaring high, and therefore the angels, who seek things above, and see far into divine mysteries, put on the face of a flying eagle.

3. By their wings, every one had four wings, ver. 6. In the vision Isaiah had of them, they appeared with six, now with four: for they appeared above the throne, and had occasion for two to cover their faces with. The angels are fitted with wings to fly swiftly on God's errands; whatever business God sends them upon they lose no time. Faith and hope are the soul's wings upon which it soars upward, pious and devout affections are its wings on which it is carried forward with vigour and alacrity. The prophet observes here concerning their wings, 1. That they were joined one to another, ver. 9. and again, ver. 11. They did not make use of their wings for fighting, as some birds do, there is no contest among the angels, God maketh peace, perfect peace, in his high places; but their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the universal agreement there is among them. 2. That they were stretched upward, extended and ready for use, not folded up, or sagging. Let an angel receive the least intimation of the divine will, and he has nothing to seek, but is upon the wing presently; while our poor dull souls are like the ostrich, that with much difficulty lifteth up herself on high. 3. That two of their wings were made use of in covering their bodies, the spiritual bodies they assumed. The clothes that cover us are our hindrance in work, angels need no other covering but their own wings, which are their furtherance. They cover their bodies from us, so forbidden us needless enquiries concerning them; ask not after them, for they are wonderful, Judg. xiii. 18. They cover them before God, so directing us when we approach to God, to see to it that we be so clothed with Christ's righteousness, as that the shame of our nakedness may not appear.

4. By their feet, including their legs and thighs; they were straight feet, ver. 7. they stood straight and firm and steady, no burden of service could make their burden to bend under them. The spouse makes this part of the description of her beloved, that his legs were as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold, Cant. v. 15. such are the angels legs. The sole of their feet was like that of a calf's foot, which divideth the hoof, and is therefore clean: As it were the soul of a round foot, as the Chaldee words it, they were ready for motion any way. Their feet were winged, so the Seventy; they went so swiftly, that it was as if they flew. And their very feet sparkled like the colour of burnished brass; not only the faces, but the very feet of those are beautiful whom God sends on his errands, 1st. lii. 7. every step the angels take is glorious. In the vision John had of Christ it is said, his feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, Rev. i. 15.

5. By their hands, ver. 8. They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; an arm and hand under every wing: They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action: Many are quick that are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to the purpose, bring nothing to pass: They have wings but no hands, whereas God's servants the angels not only go when he sends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are the hands of a man, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for service; which are guided by reason and understanding; for what angels do, they do intelligently and with judgment. They have calves feet, which speak the swiftness of their motion; the cedars of Lebanon are said to skip like a calf, Psalm xxix. 6. but they have a man's hand, which speaks the niceness and exactness of their performances; as the heavens are said to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were under their wings, which concealed them, as they did the rest of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a secret thing, and their work is carried on in an invisible way. In working for God, though we must not, with the sluggard, hide our hand in our bosom, yet we must, with the humble, not let our left hand know what our right doth. We may observe, that where these wings were, their hands were under their wings; wherever their wings carried them, they carried hands along with them, to be still doing something suitable, something that the duty of the place requires.

(4.) Their motions. The living creatures are moving; angels are active beings; it is not their happiness to sit still and do nothing, but to be always well employed; and we must reckon ourselves then best when we are doing good; doing it as the angels do it; of whom it is here observed,

1. That whatever service they went about, they went every one straight forward, ver. 9. and again, ver. 12. which intimates, (1.) That they sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a single eye to that in all they did; their going straight forward, supposeth that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. (2.) That they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with a close application of mind; they went forward with their work; for what their hand found to do they did it with all their might, and did not loiter in it. (3.) That they were unanimous in it, they went straight forward, every one about his own work, and did not thwart or juggle one another, did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. (4.) That they perfectly understood their business, and were thoroughly apprised of it, so that they needed not to stand still to pause or hesitate, but work their work before them with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. (5.) They were steady and constant in their work, they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece themselves; they moved in a direct line, and so went the next way to work in all they did, and lost no time. When we go straight we go forward, when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

2. They turned not when they went, ver. 9. and again, ver. 12. (1.) They made no blunders or mistakes, which would give them occasion to turn back to rectify them; their work needed no correction, and therefore needed not to be gone over again. (2.) They minded no diversions; as they turned not back, so they turned not aside, to trifle away with any thing that was foreign to their business.

3. They went whither the spirit was to go, ver. 12. either, (1.) Whither the

their own spirit was disposed to go, thither they went, having no bodies, as we have, to clog or hinder them. It is our infelicity and daily burden, that when the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with it, so that the good which we would do we do it not; but angels and glorified saints labour under no such impotency, but whatever they incline or intend to do, they do it and never come short of it. Or rather, (2.) Wheresoever the Spirit of God would have them go, thither they went; though they had so much wisdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they sub-jected themselves to the conduct and government of the divine will: Whithersoever the divine providence was to go they went, to serve its purposes, and to execute its orders. The spirit of God (saith Mr. Greenhill) is the great agent that sets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are easily led by the Spirit. See how tractable and obsequious these noble creature are! whithersoever the Spirit is to go, they go immediately, with all possible alacrity. Note, Those that walk after the Spirit, do the will of God as the angels do it.

4. They ran, and returned like a flash of lightning, ver. 14. This intimates, 1. That they made haste; they were quick in their motions, as quick as lightning; whatever business they went about they dispatched it presently, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Happy they that have no bodies to retard their motion in holy exercises! and happy shall we be when we come to have spiritual bodies for spiritual work! Satan falls like lightning into his own ruin, Luke x. 18. Angels fly like lightning in their Master's work; the angel Gabriel flew swiftly. 2. That they made haste back; they ran, and returned; ran to do their work, and execute their orders, and then returned to give an account of what they have done, and receive new instructions, that they may be always doing. They ran into the lower world to do what was to be done there, but when they had done it, they returned like a flash of lightning to the upper world again, to the beatific vision of their God, which they could not with any patience be longer from than their service did require. Thus we should be in the affairs of this world as out of our element; though we run into them, we must not repose in them, but our souls must presently return like lightning to God their rest and centre.

Lastly, We have an account of the light by which the prophet saw these living-creatures, or the looking-glasses in which he saw them, ver. 13. 1. He saw them by their own light, for their appearance was like burning coals of fire; they are seraphims, burners; noting the ardor of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his service, their splendor and greatness, and their terror against God's enemies; when God employs them to fight his battles, they are as coals of fire, Psalm xviii. 12. to devour the adversaries, as lightnings shot out to discomfit them. 2. He saw them by the light of some lamps, which went up and down among them, the shining whereof was very bright. Satan's works are works of darkness, he is the ruler of the darkness of this world; but the angels of light are in the light, and though they conceal their working, they shew their work, for it will bear the light. But we see them and their works only by candle-light, by the dim light of lamps, that go up and down among them; when the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, we shall see them clearly. Some make the appearance of their burning coals, and of the lightning that issues out of the fire, to signify the wrath of God, and his judgments, that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, in which angels were to be employed: And accordingly we find afterwards coals of fire scattered upon the city to consume it, which were fetched from between the cherubims, chap. x. 2. But by the appearance of the lamps then we may understand the light of comfort which shone forth to the people of God in the darkness of this present trouble; If the ministry of the angels is as a consuming fire to God's enemies, it is as a rejoicing light to his own children. To the one this fire is bright, it is very reviving and refreshing; to the other out of the fire comes fresh lightning to destroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends or enemies according as God is.

15. ¶ Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they returned not when they went. 18. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful: and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. 19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. 21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood: and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. 23. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. 25. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

The prophet is very exact in making and recording his observations concerning this vision. And here we have,

(1.) The notice he took of the wheels, ver. 15—21. The glory of God appears not only in the splendor of his retinue in the upper world, but in the steadiness of his government here in this lower world. Having seen how God doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, let us now

see how he doth according to it among the inhabitants of the earth; for there, on the earth, the prophet saw the wheels, ver. 15. As he beheld the living creatures, and was contemplating the glory of that vision, and receiving instruction from it, this other vision presented itself to his view. Note, Those who make a good use of the discoveries God has favoured them with, may expect further discoveries; for to him that hath shall be given. We are sometimes tempted to think there is nothing glorious but what is in the upper world, whereas, could we with an eye of faith discern the beauty of providence, and the wisdom, power, and goodness, which shine in the administration of that kingdom, we would see and say, Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth, and acts like himself. There are many things in this vision, which give us some light concerning the divine providence.

1. The dispensations of providence are compared to wheels, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph, or rather the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of the course or wheel of nature, James iii. 6, which is here set before us as under the direction of the God of nature. Wheels, though they move not of themselves, as the living creatures do, yet they are made moveable, and are almost continually kept in action. Providence, represented by these wheels, orders, changes, sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, and sometimes another; but the motion of the wheel on its own axle-trees, like that of the orbs above, is very regular and steady. The motion of the wheels is circular; by the revolutions of providence things are brought to the same posture and pass which they were in formerly; for the thing that is, is that which has been, and there is no new thing under the sun, Eccles. i. 9, 10.

2. The wheel is said to be by the living creatures, who attended it to direct its motion; for the angels are employed as the ministers of God's providence, and have a greater hand in directing the motions of second causes to serve the divine purpose than we think they have. Such a close connection is there between the living creatures and the wheels, that they moved and rested together. Were angels busily employed? men were busily employed, as instruments in their hand, whether of mercy or judgment, though they themselves were not aware of it: Or, are men active to compass their designs; angels at the same time are acting to control and overrule them. This is much insisted on here, ver. 19. When the living creatures went, to bring about any business, the wheels went by them; when God has work to do by the ministry of angels, second causes are all found or made ready to concur in it; and, ver. 21. when those stood, these stood; when the angels had done their work, the second causes had done theirs. If the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, were elevated to any service above the common course of nature, and out of the ordinary road, as suppose in the working of miracles, the dividing of the water, the standing still of the sun, the wheels, contrary to their own natural tendency, which is towards the earth, move in concert with them, and are lifted up over against them; this is thrice mentioned, ver. 10, 20, 21. Note, All inferior creatures are, and move, and act, as the Creator, by the ministration of angels, directs and influences them. Visible effects are managed and governed by invisible causes.

The reason given of this is, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels, i. e. the same wisdom, power, and holiness of God, the same will and counsel of his, that guides and governs the angels, and all their performances, doth by them, order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and issues of them. God is the soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above, and that beneath, so that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do; so that whithersoever the spirit is to go, i. e. whatever it is God's will and purpose should be done, and brought to pass, thither their spirit is to go, i. e. the angels, knowingly and designedly, set themselves to bring it about, and their spirit is in the wheels, which are therefore lifted up over against them, i. e. both the powers of nature and the wills of men, are all made to serve the intention, which they intentially and irresistibly effect, though perhaps they meant not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. x. 7. Mic. iv. 11, 12. Thus, though the will of God's precept be not done on earth, as it is done in heaven, yet, the will of his purpose and counsel is, and shall be.

3. The wheel is said to have four faces, looking four several ways, ver. 15, noting that the providence of God exerts itself in all parts of the world, east, west, north, and south, and extends itself to the remotest corners of it. Look which way you will upon the wheel of providence, and it has a face towards you, a beautiful one, which you may admire the features and complexion of; it looks upon you as ready to speak to you, if you be but ready to hear the voice of it; like a well-drawn picture, it has an eye upon all that has an eye upon it.

The wheel had so four faces, that it had in it four wheels, which went upon their four sides, ver. 17. At first Ezekiel saw it as one wheel, ver. 15. one sphere, but afterwards he saw it was four, but they four had one likeness, ver. 16. not only they were like one another, but they were as if they had been one. This intimates, 1. That one event of providence is like another; what happens to us is that which is common to men, and what we are not to think strange. 2. That various events have a tendency to the same issue, and concur to answer the same intention.

4. Their appearance and their work is said to be like the colour of a beryl, ver. 16. the colour of Turquoise, so the word is, i. e. of the sea; the beryl is of that colour, sea-green; blue Neptune we call it. The nature of things in this world is like that of the sea, which is in a continual flux, and yet there is a constant coherence and succession of its parts. There is a chain of events which is always in the drawing one way or other. The sea ebbs and flows, so doth providence in its disposals, but always in the stated appointed times and measures. The sea looks blue, as the air doth, because of the shortness and feebleness of our sight, which can see but a little way off either; to that colour therefore is the appearance and work of providence fitly compared, because we cannot find out that which God doth from the beginning to the end, Eccles. iii. 11. we see but parts of his ways, Job xxvi. 14. and all beyond look blue, which gives us to understand no more concerning it, but that in truth we ken it not, it is far above out of our sight.

5. Their appearance and their work is likewise said to be as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Observe here again, their appearance to the prophet is designed to set forth what their work really is; men's appearance and their work often differ, but the appearance of God's providence and its work agree; if they seem to differ, it is through our ignorance and mistake. Now both were as a wheel in a wheel, a lesser wheel moved by a greater; we pretend not to give a mathematical description of it; the meaning is, that the disposals of providence seem to us intricate and perplexed, and unaccountable, and yet they will appear in that issue to have been all wisely ordered for the best; so that though what God doth we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, John xiii. 7.

6. The motion of these wheels, like that of the living creatures, was steady, and regular, and constant, they returned not when they went, ver. 17. because they never went amiss, nor otherwise than they should do. God,

in his providence, takes his work before him, and he will have it forward; and it is going on even then when it seems to us to be going backward. *They went as the Spirit directed them, and therefore returned not.* We should not have occasion to return back as we have, and to undo that by repentance which we have done amiss, and to do it over again, if we were but *led by the Spirit*, and followed his conduct. *The spirit of life* (so some read it) *was in the wheels*, which carried them on with ease and evenness, and then they returned not when they went.

7. The rings or rims of the wheels were so high that they were dreadful, ver. 18. They were of a vast circumference, so that when they were reared and put in motion, the prophet was even afraid to look upon them. Note, The vast compass of God's thought, and the vast reach of his design, is really astonishing; when we go about to describe the circle of providence, we are struck with amazement, and are even swallowed up. O the height and depth of God's counsels! the consideration whereof should strike an awe upon us.

8. They were full of eyes round about. This circumstance of the vision is most surprising of all, and yet most significant, plainly speaking that the motions of providence are all directed by infinite wisdom. The issues of things are not determined by a blind fortune, but by those eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the earth, and are in every place beholding the evil and the good. Note, It is a great satisfaction to us, and ought to be so, that though we cannot account for the springs and tendencies of events, yet they are all under the cognizance and conduct of an all-wise, all-seeing God.

(2) The notice he took of the firmament above, over the heads of the living creatures. When he saw the living creatures moving, and the wheels by them, he looked up, as it is proper for us to do when we observe the various motions of providence in this lower world; looking up, he saw the firmament stretched forth over the heads of the living creatures, ver. 22. What is done on earth, is done under the heaven (as the scripture often speaks) under its inspiration and influence.

Observe, 1. What he saw: *The firmament was as the colour of the terrible crystal*, truly glorious, but terribly so; the vastness and brightness of it put the prophet into an amazement, and struck him with an awful reverence. *The terrible ice or frost*, so it may be read; the colour of snow congealed, or as mountains of ice in the northern seas, which are very frightful. Daring sinners ask, *Can God judge through the dark cloud?* Job xxii. 13. but that which we take to be a dark cloud, is to him transparent as crystal, through which, from the place of his habitation, he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth, Psalm xxxiii. 14. Under the firmament he saw the wings of the living creatures erect, ver. 23. when they pleased, they used them either for flight or for covering, or two for flight, and two for covering. God is on high, above the firmament, the angels are under the firmament, which notes their subjection to God's dominion, and their readiness to fly on his errands in the open firmament of heaven, and to serve him unanimously.

2. What he heard,

(1.) He heard the noise of the angels wings, ver. 24. Bees and other insects make a great noise with the vibration of their wings; here the angels do so, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to say to him from the firmament, ver. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, found God's alarms to the children of men, and stir them up to hear his voice; for that is it that cries in the city, and is heard and understood by the men of wisdom. *The noise of their wings* was loud and terrible, as the noise of great waters, like the rout or roaring of the sea; and as the noise of an host, the noise of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not give an uncertain sound; for it was the voice of speech; nay it was as the voice of the Almighty; for God, by his providence, speaks once, yea twice; if we could but perceive it, Job xxxiii. 14. the Lord's voice cries, Micah vi. 9.

(2) He heard a voice from the firmament, from him that sits upon the throne there, ver. 25. When the angels moved, they made a noise with their wings, but when with that they had roused a careless world, they stood still, and let down their wings, that there might be a profound silence, and so God's voice might be the better heard. The voice of providence is designed to open men's ears to the voice of the word, to do the office of the crier, that with a loud voice charges silence while the judge passeth sentence. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear*. Note, Noises on earth should awaken our attention to the voice of the firmament; for how shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven!

26. ¶ And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. 27. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. 28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made himself known as Lord of angels, and supreme Director of all his affairs of this lower world, from whence it is easy to infer, that whatever God by his prophets either promise or threateneth to do, he is able to effect it; angels are his servants, men are his tools. But now a divine revelation is to be given to a prophet, and by him to the church, we must look higher than the living creatures of the wheels, and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel hearing a voice from the firmament looked up, as John did, to see the voice that spake with him, and he saw one like unto the Son of man, Rev. i. 12, 13. The second person sometimes tried the fashion of a man, occasionally, before he clothed himself with it for good and all; and the Spirit of prophecy is called the Spirit of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 11. and the Testimony of Jesus, Rev. xix. 10.

1. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw was above the firmament that was over the heads of the living creatures, ver. 26. Note, The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads is under his feet; angels, principalities and powers are made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This dignity and dominion of the Redeemer before his incarnation magnifies his condescension in his incarnation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, Heb. ii. 9.

2. The first thing he observed was a throne, for divine revelation comes backed and supported with a royal authority: we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a throne. The first thing that John discovered in his visions was a throne set in heaven, Rev. iv. 2. which commands reverence and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment; *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens*, has prepared it for his Son, whom he hath set King on his holy hill of Zion.

3. On the throne he saw the appearance of a man. This is good news to the children of men, that the throne above the firmament is filled with one that is not ashamed to appear, even there, in the likeness of man. Daniel, in vision, saw the kingdom and dominion given to one like the Son of man, who therefore hath authority given to him to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man, John v. 27. so appearing in these visions.

4. The prince and judge upon this throne, though he appear in fashion as a man, yet he appears in more than human glory, ver. 27. (1.) Is God a shining light? so is he when the prophet saw him, he saw him as the colour of amber, that is, a brightness round about; for God dwells in light, and covers himself with light as with a garment. How low did the Redeemer stoop for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered his glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity. (2.) Is God a consuming fire? so is he: from his loins, both upward and downward, there was the appearance of fire. The fire above the loins was round about within the amber, it was inward and involved; that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had brightness round about. Some make the former to signify Christ's divine nature, the glory and virtue of which is hid within the colour of amber; it is what no man has seen or can see; the latter his human nature, the glory of which there were those that saw; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14. He had rays coming out of his hand, and yet there was the aiding of his power, Hab. iii. 4. The fire in which the son of man appeared here might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that fiery indignation of the Almighty which devours the adversaries. Nothing more dreadful to the most daring sinners than the wrath of him that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb, Rev. vi. 16. The day is coming, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. It concerns us therefore to kiss the Son lest he be angry.

5. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow, ver. 28. it is so in St. John's vision, Rev. iv. 3. the brightness about it was of divers colours, as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain; which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so it is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he hath said, he will look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, Gen. ix. 16. This intimates, that he who sits upon the throne is the mediator of the covenant, that his dominion is for our protection, not our destruction; that he interposeth between us and the judgments our sins have deserved; and that all the promises of God are in him yea and amen. Now the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bounds shall be set to it, and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would look upon the bow and remember the covenant, as he promised in such a case, Lev. xxvi. 42.

Lastly, We have the conclusion of this vision:

1. What notion the prophet himself had of it; *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.* Here, all along, he is careful to guard against all gross corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He doth not say, *This was the Lord*, for he is invisible, but, *This was the glory of the Lord*, in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being: yet it is not the glory of the Lord, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it: nor is it any adequate likeness of that glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very image of the thing, Heb. x. 1.

2. What impressions it made upon him; *when I saw it I fell upon my face.* (1.) He was overpowered by it, the dazzling lustre of it conquered him and threw him upon his face; for who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Or rather, (2.) He prostrated himself, in a humble sense of his own unworthiness of the honour now done him, and of the infinite distance which he now, more than ever, perceived to be between him and God; he fell upon his face, in token of that holy awe and reverence of God which his mind was possessed and filled with. Note, The more God is pleased to make known of himself to us, the more low we should be before him. He fell upon his face to adore the majesty of God, and to implore his mercy, and to deprecate the wrath he saw ready to break out against the children of his people.

3. What instructions he had from it: all he saw was only to prepare him for that which he was to hear, for *faith comes by hearing*: he therefore heard a voice of one that spake; for we are taught by words, not merely by hieroglyphics. When he fell on his face ready to receive the word, then he heard the voice of one that spake; for God delights to teach the humble.

C H A P. II.

What our Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, Acts xxvi. 16. may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Jesus is here speaking, Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister. We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office; which the vision was designed to fit him for: not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business. Now here, 1. He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time, ver. 1—5. 2. He is cautioned not to be afraid of them, ver. 6. 3. He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, which is signified by the vision of a roll, which he was ordered to eat, ver. 7—10. and which, in the next chapter, we find he did eat.

1. AND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. 4. For they are impudent children and stiff-hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God, 5. And they, whether they will

will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable; God, when he speaks to him, calls him, *Son of man*, ver. 1—3. *Son of Adam*, *Son of the earth*. Daniel is once called so, *Dan. viii. 17.* and but once; the compellation is used to no other of the prophets, but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it, 1. As an humble diminishing title, lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that still he is a *son of man*, a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a *son of man*, and therefore it was wonderful condescension in God that he was pleased thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels, yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature; *what is man, or the son of man*, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, that were ready to go on his errands, yet he passeth them all by, and pitched on Ezekiel, a *son of man*, to be his messenger to the house of Israel, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust; it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. He was now to be employed as a prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms, *Jer. i. 10.* a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a *son of man*, and whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a *son of man*, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament, *Dan. vii. 13.* *I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven*, from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, *The Son of man*. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the *Lord's anointed* or *Christ*, so Ezekiel the prophet is called *son of man*.

1. Ezekiel is here set up, and made to stand, that he might receive his commission, ver. 1, 2. He is set up,

(1.) By a divine command: *Son of man, stand upon thy feet.* His lying prostrate was a posture of greater reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness and fitness for business. Our adorings of God must not hinder, but rather quicken and excite our doings for God. He fell on his face in a holy tear and awe of God, but he was quickly raised up again; for they that humble themselves shall be exalted; God delights not in the dejections of his servants, but the same that brings them low will raise them up; the same that is a spirit of bondage will be a spirit of adoption. *Stand, and I will speak to thee.* Note, We may then expect that God will speak to us, when we stand ready to do what he commands us.

(2.) By a divine power going along with that command, ver. 2. God bid him stand up, but because he had not strength of his own to recover his feet, nor courage to face the vision, the spirit entered into him, and set him upon his feet. Note, God is graciously pleased to work that in us which he requires of us, and raiseth those whom he bids rise. We must stir up ourselves, and then God will work in us; must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. He observed that the Spirit entered into him then when Christ spake to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet, to raise him from his dejections, for he is the Comforter. Thus, in the like case, Daniel was strengthened by a divine touch, *Dan. x. 18.* and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, *Rev. i. 17.* the Spirit set him upon his feet, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he heard him that spake to him. He heard the voice before, chap. i. 28. but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, heard it and submitted to it. The Spirit sets us upon our feet, by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby disposeth the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

2. Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go with a message to the children of Israel, ver. 3. *I send thee to the children of Israel.* God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes and tending them, but to little purpose, they were now sent into captivity for abusing God's messengers; and yet even there God sends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to discipline, now they were holden in the cords of affliction. As the supports of life, so the means of grace are continued to us after they have been a thousand times forfeited. Now observe,

1. The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; and he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God; let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a rebellious nation, ver. 3. a rebellious house, ver. 5. They are called children of Israel, they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they are wretchedly degenerated, they are become *Gomims*, nations, the word commonly used for the Gentiles; the children of Israel are become as the children of the Ethiopian, *Amos ix. 7.* for they are rebellious; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and false worship were the sins which, more than any other, denominated them a rebellious nation, for thereby they set up another prince in opposition to their rightful sovereign, and did homage and paid tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

(1.) They had been all along a rebellious generation, and had persisted in their rebellion, *they and their fathers have transgressed against me.* Note, Those are not always in the right, that have antiquity and the fathers on their side; for there are errors and corruptions of long standing; and it is so far from being an excuse for walking in an ill-way, that our father walked in it, that it is really an aggravation, for it is justifying the sin of those that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion even unto this very day; notwithstanding the various means and methods that have been made use of to reclaim them; to this day, when they are under divine rebukes for their rebellion, yet they continue rebellious; many among them, like Ahaz, even in their distress, trespass yet more; they are not the better for all the changes that have been concerning them, but still remain unchanged.

(2.) They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are impudent children, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are stiff-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop; neither ashamed nor afraid to sin; they will not be wrought upon by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope, this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe, (1.) God knew this concerning them, how inflexible, how incorrigible they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted

with every man's true character; whatever his pretensions and professions may be. (2.) He told the prophet this, that he might know the better how to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those sharply, cuttingly; must deal plainly with them, though they call it dealing roughly. God tells him this, that it might be no surprise or stumbling-block to him, if he found that his preaching should not make that impression upon them, which he had reason to think it would.

2. The dominion of the prince by whom this ambassador is sent. (1.) He has authority to command him whom he sends, *I do find thee unto them*, and therefore thou shalt say thus and thus unto them, ver. 4. Note, It is the prerogative of Christ to send prophets and ministers, and to enjoin them their work. St. Paul thanked Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry, *1 Tim. i. 12.* for as he was sent of the Father, ministers are sent by him; and as he received the Spirit without measure, he gives the Spirit by measure, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* They are impudent and rebellious, and yet I send thee unto them. Note, Christ gives the means of grace to many that he knows will not make a good use of those means; puts many a price into the hand of fools that have not only no heart to it, but have their hearts turned against it. Thus he will magnify his own grace, justify his own judgment, leave them inexcusable, and make their condemnation more intolerable. (2.) He has authority by him to command those to whom he sends him: *Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God.* All he said to them must be spoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Christ delivered his doctrines as a Son, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; the prophets as servants, *Thus saith the Lord God, our master and your's.* Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and so are to be regarded by every one of us. (3.) He has authority to call those to an account to whom he sends his ambassadors. *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, whether they will stand to the word or turn their backs upon it, they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them, shall know by experience. 1. If they hear and obey they will know by comfortable experience, that the word which did them good was brought them by one that had a commission from God, and a divine power going along with them in the execution of it. Thus they who are converted by St. Paul's preaching are said to be the seals of his apostleship, *1 Cor. ix. 2.* When men's hearts are made to burn under the word and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of man, but of God. 2. If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, as it is to be feared they will, for they are a rebellious house, yet they shall be made to know, that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, but the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a pernicious dangerous thing it is to despise God's messengers. They shall know by the accomplishment of the threatenings, that the prophet who denounced them was sent of God; thus the word will take hold of men, *Zech. i. 6.* Note, (1.) Those to whom the word of God is sent are upon their trial, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, and accordingly will their doom be. (2.) Whether we be edified by the word or no, it is certain God will be glorified, and his word magnified and made honourable. Whether it be a *fiavour of life unto life*, or of *death unto death*, either way it will appear to be of divine original.

6. ¶ And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. 8. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious, like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. ¶ And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me, and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10. And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

The prophet having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work, and it is here required of him.

1. That he be bold: He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work, or made to drive on heavily by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it: *Son of man, be not afraid of them*, ver. 6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God, must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. (1.) God tells the prophet what was the character of those to whom he sent him, as before, ver. 3, 4. They are briers and thorns, scratching, and tearing, and vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and intangling them in their talk, *Matt. xxii. 15.* they are pricking briers and grievous thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge, *Mic. vii. 4.* Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and of equal date with the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Note, Wicked men, especially the persecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good seed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen, but they are nigh unto cursing, and their end is to be burned; yet God makes use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as *Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers*, *Judges viii. 16.* yet this is not the work of their character, they are scorpions, venomous and malignant; the sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier; persecutors are a generation of vipers, are of the serpent's seed, and the poison of asps is under their tongue; and they are more subtle than any beast of the field. And which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among those scorpions, they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe or quiet in his own house; these ill men are his ill neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none to do him a mischief. God takes notice of this to the prophet, as Christ to the angel of one of the churches, *Rev. ii. 13.* *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.* Ezekiel had been in vision conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount he finds he dwells with scorpions. (2.) He tells him what would be the carriage toward him,

that they would do what they could to frighten him with *their looks and their words*; they would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him from being a prophet, or at least from telling them of their faults, and threatening them with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, so that they had no other way of persecuting the prophet but with *their looks and their words*, and so they did persecute him. *Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst*, Jer. iii. 5. If they had had more power they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing God's prophets, and yet they are as bad as ever; *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*; no providences will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them. But how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be afraid of them, nor dismayed, he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it, by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the divine protection.

2. It is required that he be faithful, ver. 7. (1.) He must be faithful to Christ who sent him: *Thou shalt speak my words unto them*. Note, As it is the honour of prophets that they are intrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave close to them, and to speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; ministers must always speak according to that rule. (2.) He must be faithful to the souls of those to whom he was sent; *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, he must deliver his message to them as he received it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. It is true, they are *most rebellious*, they are rebellion itself, but however *speak my words* to them, whether they are pleasing or unpleasing. Note, The untractableness and unprofitableness of people under the word, is no good reason why ministers should leave off preaching to them; nor must we decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

3. It is required that he is observant of his instructions.

(1.) Here is a general intimation what the instructions were that were given him in the contents of the book which was spread before him, ver. 10. 1. His instructions were large, for the roll was *written within and without*, on the inside and on the backside of the roll; it was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins, the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God hath a great deal to say to his people when they are degenerated and become rebellious. 2. His instructions were melancholy, it was sent on a sad errand; the matter contained in the book was *lamentations and mourning, and woe*. The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it, it would set them a weeping and crying out, woe and alas; both the discoveries of sin and the denunciations of wrath would be matter of lamentations. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more woeful, than to see a holy, happy people sunk into such a state of sin and misery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes Jeremiah's lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impenitent sinners will find there are even among his words *lamentations and woe*.

(2.) Here is an express charge given the prophet to observe his instructions both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded,

1. To attend diligently to it, *Son of man, hear what I say unto thee*, ver. 8. Note, Those that speak from God to others, must be sure to hear from God themselves, and be obedient to his voice. *Be not thou rebellious*, i. e. do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliging thy countrymen. They are a *rebellious house*, among whom thou livest, but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil. If ministers, that are reprovers by office, connive at sin and indulge sinners, either shew them not their wickedness, or shew them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partakers of their guilt, and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproof, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had, *Isa. l. 5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious*. Even the best men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst crimes.

2. To digest it in his own mind by an experience of the favour and power of it. Do not only *hear what I say unto thee*, but *open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee*: Prepare to eat it, and eat it willingly, and with an appetite. All God's children are content to be at their heavenly Father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to Ezekiel was a roll of a book, or the volume of a book: a book, or scroll of paper or parchment full written, and rolled up. Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Christ, he gave it the prophets, *Rev. i. 1.* when we look at the roll of the book, we must have an eye to the hand by which it is sent to us. He that brought it to the prophet spread it before him, that he might not swallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully understand the contents of it, and then receive it and make it his own. *Be not rebellious*, faith Christ, but *eat what I gave thee*. If we receive not what Christ in his ordinances and providences allots for us, if we submit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not ourselves to both, we shall be accounted rebellious.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have the further preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him. 1. His eating of the roll that was presented to him in the close of the foregoing chapter, ver. 1—3. 2. Further instructions and encouragements given him to the same purpose with those in the foregoing chapter, ver. 4—11. 3. The mighty impulse he was under, with which he was carried to those that were to be his hearers, ver. 12—15. 4. A further explication of his office and business as a prophet, under the similitude of a watchman, ver. 16—21. 5. The restraining and restoring of the prophets liberty of speech, as God pleased, ver. 22—27.

1. **M**OREOVER he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and

it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. 4. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel: 6. Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. 8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 10. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee, receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. 11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the LORD God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12. Then the spirit took me up; and I heard behind me a voice of great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place. 13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. 15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abid, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

These verses are fitly joined by some translators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it, and a continuation of the same vision. The prophets received the words from God, that they might deliver them to the people of God; furnished themselves that they might furnish them with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

(1.) How he must receive divine revelation himself, ver. 1. Christ (whom he saw upon the throne, chap. i. 28.) said to him, *Son of man, eat this roll*; admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thine heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is intire, and make no difficulty of it, nay take a pleasure in it as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten. Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God which they are to preach to others, *Thy words are found, and I did eat them*, Jer. xv. 16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now observe,

1. How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the chapter before, *Eat what I give thee*; and here, ver. 1. *Eat that thou findest*; i. e. that which is presented to thee by the hand of Christ. Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we must receive it without disputing. What we find set before us in the scripture, that we must eat. And again, ver. 3. *Cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll*; do not eat it and bring it up again, as that which is nauseous, but eat it and retain it, as that which is nourishing and grateful to the stomach. Feast upon this vision till thou be full of matter, as Elihu was, *Job xxxii. 18.* Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place; we must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may do its office, in order to the due digesting of the word of God; that it may be turned in *succum & sanguinem*, into blood and spirits. We must empty ourselves of worldly things, that we may fill our bowels with this roll.

2. How this command is explained, ver. 10. *All my words, that I shall speak unto thee*, to be spoken unto the people, *thou must receive in thine heart*, as well as *hear with thine ears*, receive them in the love of them. *Let these sayings sink down into your ears*, Luke ix. 44. Christ demands the prophet's attention, not only to what he now saith, but to all that he shall at any time hereafter speak; *receive it all in thine heart, meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them*, 1 Tim. iv. 15.

3. How this command was obeyed in vision: He opened his mouth, and Christ caused him to eat the roll, ver. 2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them, and cause it to dwell in us richly. If he that opens the roll, and by his Spirit, as a spirit of revelation, spreads it before us, did not also open our understanding, and by his Spirit, as a spirit of wisdom, give us the knowledge of it, and cause us to eat it, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had reason to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved it was in his mouth as honey for sweetness. Note, If we readily obey even the most difficult commands, we shall find that comfort in the reflection which will make us abundant amends for all the hardships we meet with in the way of our duty. Though the roll was filled with lamentations, and mourning, and woe, yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, *Rev. x. 9, 10.* He took the book out of the angels hand, and eat it up, and it was, as this here, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in the belly; and we shall find that this here was so too, for, ver. 14. the prophet went in bitterness.

(2.) How he must deliver that divine revelation to others which he himself had received, ver. 1. *Eat this roll, and then go, speak to the house of Israel*. 1. He must not undertake to preach the things of God to others, till he did himself fully understand them; let him not go without his errand,

errand, or take it by the halves. 2. When he doth himself fully understand them, he must be both busy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We must not *conceal the words of the Holy One*, Job vi. 10 for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with. He must go, and speak to the house of Israel, for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law, the lively oracles, so prophesy, the living oracle, *pertains to them*. He is not sent to the Chaldeans to reprove them for their sins, but the house of Israel to reprove them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger.

The instructions given him in speaking to them are much the same with those in the foregoing chapter.

1. He must speak to them all that, and that only, which God spake to him. He had said before, chap. ii. 7. *Thou shalt speak my words to them*; here he saith, ver. 4 *Thou shalt speak with my words unto them*; or in my words; he must not only say that which for substance is the same that God had said to him, but as near as may be in the same language and expressions. Blessed Paul, though a man of very happy invention, yet speaks of the things of God in the words which the holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. ii. 13. Scripture truths look best in scripture language, their native dress; and how can we better speak God's mind than with his words?

2. He must remember that they are the house of Israel, whom he is sent to speak to; God's house, and his own; and therefore such as he ought to have a particular concern for, and to deal faithfully and tenderly with: They were such as he had an intimate acquaintance with, being not only their countryman, but their companion in tribulation; they and he were fellow-sufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers, in very melancholy circumstances from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to sympathise with them, and could not but be touched with the feelings of these infirmities: It was well for the prophet that he had to do with those of his own nation, not with a people of strange speech, and a hard language; deep of lip, so that thou canst not fathom their meaning, and heavy of tongue, whom it is intolerable and impossible to converse with: Every strange language seems to us to be deep and heavy. Thou art not sent to many such people, whom thou couldst neither speak to nor hear from, neither understand nor be understood among, but by an interpreter: The apostles indeed were sent to many people of a strange speech, but they could not have done any good among them, if they had not had the gift of tongues: But Ezekiel was sent only to one people, those but a few, and his own, whom having acquaintance with, he might hope to find acceptance with.

3. He must remember what God had already told him of the ill character of those to whom he was sent, that if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are impudent and hard-hearted, ver. 7. no convictions of sin would make them blush, no denunciations of wrath would make them tremble. Two things aggravated their obstinacy: 1. That they were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech surely they would have hearkened to him, they would at least have given him a patient hearing, and shewed him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were brought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the house of Israel, that was compassed about with so great a cloud of prophets, was unhumiliated and unreformed. But what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them, and withheld from those that would have improved them: We must resolve this into the divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, thy judgments are a great deep. 2. That they were obstinate against God himself; they will not hearken unto thee, and no marvel, for they will not hearken unto me; they will not regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven: Nay, therefore they reject what the prophet saith, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmity to: They are prejudiced against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

4. He must resolve to put on courage, and Christ promiseth to steel him with it, ver. 8, 9. He is sent to such as are impudent and hard-hearted, that will receive no impressions, nor be wrought upon either by fair means or foul, that will take a pride in affronting God's messengers, and confronting the message: It will be a hard task to know how to deal with them: But, 1. God will enable him to put a good face on it; *I have made thy face strong against their faces*, i. e. endued thee with all the firmness and boldness that the case calls for. Perhaps Ezekiel was naturally bashful and timorous, but if God did not find him fit, yet by his grace he made him fit to encounter the greatest difficulties. Note, The more impudent wicked people are in their opposition to religion, the more openly and resolutely should God's people appear in the practice and defence of it. Let the innocent stir up himself against the hypocrite, Job xvii. 8. When vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking: And when God has work to do, he will spirit men for it, and give them strength according to the day: If there be occasion, God can and will by his grace make the foreheads of faithful ministers as an adamant, so that the most threatening powers shall not dash them out of countenance. *The Lord God will help me, therefore have I set my face like a flint*, Isa. l. 7. 2. He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it, and to go on in his work with a holy security, not valuing either the censures or the threats of his enemies. *Fear not, neither be dismayed at their looks*, let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee, or a stumbling-block before thee. Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttily, Tit. i. 12, 13. must be saved with fear, Jude 23. Those that keep close to the service of God may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the angry countenance that drives away a backbiting tongue give any check to a reproving tongue.

5. He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, ver. 11. He must go to them of the captivity, who being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction, must look upon them as the children of his people, to whom he was nearly allied, and for whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinsmen, Rom. ix. 3. And he must tell them not only what the Lord said, but that the Lord said it; let him speak in God's name, and back what he said with his authority, *Thus saith the Lord God: Tell them so, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*. Not that it may be indifferent to us what success our ministry has, but whatever it may be, we must go on with our work, and leave the issue to God. We must not say, here are some so good that we do not need to speak to them; or, here are others so bad that it is to no purpose to speak to them; but however it be, deliver thy message faithfully, tell them, the Lord God saith so and so, let them reject it at their peril.

Full instructions being thus given to the prophet, pursuant to his commission, we are here told,

(1.) With what satisfaction this mission of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleased to see one, of a nature inferior to their own, thus honourably employed and intrusted. He heard a voice of a great rushing, ver. 12. as if the angels thronged and crowded to see the inauguration of a prophet; for to them is known by the church, that is, by reflection from the church, the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. They seemed to strive who should get nearest to this great sight. He heard the noise of their wings that touched, or as the word is, *kissed one another*; noting the mutual affections and assistances of the angels. He heard also the noise of the wheels of providence moving over against the angels, and in concert with them: All this was to engage his attention, and to convince him that the God that sent him, having such a glorious train of attendants, no doubt had power sufficient to bear him out in his work. But all this noise ended in the voice of praise, he heard them saying, *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place*; i. e. From heaven, his place above, whence his glory was now in vision descending, or whither perhaps it was now returning. Let an innumerable company of angels above join with those employed in this vision, in saying, *Blessed be the glory of the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him all his angels*, Psalm cxlviii. 1, 2. From the temple, his place on earth, whence his glory was now departing: They lament the departure of the glory, but adore the righteousness of God in it: However it be, yet God is blessed and glorious, and ever will be so. The prophet Isaiah heard God thus praised when he received his commission, Isa. vi. 4. and a comfort it is to all the faithful servants of God, when they see how much God is dishonoured in this lower world, to think how much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. *The glory of the Lord hath many sights from our place, but many praises from his place*.

(2.) With what reluctance of his own spirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, the prophet was himself brought to the execution of his office. *The grace given to him was not in vain*; for,

1. The Spirit led him with a strong hand. God bid him go, but he stirred not till the Spirit took him up. *The spirit of the living creatures that was in the wheels*, now was in the prophet too, and took him up; first to hear more distinctly the acclamations of the angels, ver. 12. but afterwards, ver. 14. *lifted him up, and took him away* to his work, which he was backward to, being very loth either to bring trouble upon himself, or to set it to his people: He would have gladly have been excused, but must own as another prophet doth, Jer. xx. 7. *Thou wast stronger than I, and hast prevailed*. Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and saw to himself, that it might go no further, but the hand of the Lord was stronger upon him, and overpowered him; he was carried on contrary to his own inclinations by the prophetic impulse, so that he could not but speak the things which he had heard and seen, as the apostles, Acts iv. 20. Note, Those whom God calls to the ministry, as he furnisheth their heads for it, so he bows their hearts to it.

2. He followed with a sad heart. *The spirit took me away*, saith he, *and then I went*, but it was in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit. He had perhaps seen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jerusalem when he appeared as a prophet, what pains he took, what opposition he met with, how he was abused by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpose; and must I be set up for a mark like him, thinks Ezekiel? The life of a captive was bad enough; but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? therefore he went in this fret and under this discomposure. Note, There may in some cases be a great reluctance of corruption, even there where there is a manifest predominancy of grace. *I went, not disobedient to the heavenly vision*, or carrying the work, as Jonah, but *I went in bitterness*, not at all pleased with it. When he received the divine revelation himself, it was to him *sweet as honey*, ver. 3. he could with abundance of pleasure have spent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, who he foresees will be hardened and exasperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, then he goes in bitterness. Note, It is a great grief to faithful ministers, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable, and hating to be reformed. He went in the heat of his spirit, because of the discouragements he fore-saw he should meet with, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him, not only to compel him to his work, but to fit him for it, and carry him through it, and animate him against the difficulties he would meet with, (so we may understand it) and when he found it so, he was better reconciled to his business, and applied himself to it: *Then he came to them of the captivity*, ver. 15 to some place where there were many of them together, and sit where they sat, either working, or reading, or talking, and continued among them seven days, to hear what they said, and observe what they did; and all that time he was waiting for the word of the Lord to come to him. Note, Those that would speak suitably and profitably to people about their souls, must acquaint themselves with them, and with their case; must do as Ezekiel did here, must sit where they sit, and speak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themselves into their condition, yet though they sit by the rivers of Babylon. But observe, he was there astonished, overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people, and overpowered by the pomp of the vision he had seen: he was there desolate, so come read it; God shewed him no visions, men made him no visits; thus was he left to digest his grief, and come to a better temper, before the word of the Lord should come to him. Note, Those whom God designs to exalt and enlarge, he first humbles and straitens for a time.

16. And it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou shalt delivered thy soul. 20. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine

thine hand. 21. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These farther instructions God gave to the prophet at the end of seven days, i. e. on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probable that both that and this were on the sabbath-day, which the house of Israel, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances; we do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian task-masters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath rest, for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; but for the sabbath work, they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a place by the river side, where prayer was wont to be made, as Acts xvi. 13. there they met on the sabbath-day, there their enemies upbraided them with the songs of Zion, Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 3. there Ezekiel met them, and the word of the Lord then and there came to him. He that had been musing and meditating on the things of God all the week, was fit to speak to the people in God's name on the sabbath-day, and disposed to hear God speak to him.

This sabbath day Ezekiel was not so honoured with visions of the glory of God, as he had been the sabbath before; but is plainly, and by a very vulgar similitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and transports of joy are not the daily bread of God's children, however they may upon special occasions be feasted with them. We must not deny but that we have truly communion with God, (1 John i. 3.) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times. And though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily it is plain preaching that is most for edification.

God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may suppose) he was to tell the people, that they might attend to what he said, and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them, and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

(1.) What the office is to which the prophet is called, *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel*, ver. 17. This vision he saw astonished him, he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him to the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do, he is a watchman, and has something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a watchman in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace; as a watchman over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey; but especially as a watchman in the camp, in an invaded country or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance of danger. This supposeth the house of Israel to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon it; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls. Isa. lxiii. 6. *watchmen that go about the city*, Cant. iii. 3. It is a toilsome office; watchmen must keep awake he they never so sleepy, and keep abroad be it never so cold; they must stand all weathers upon the watch-tower, Isa. xxi. 8. Gen. xxxi. 40. It is a dangerous office; sometimes they cannot keep their post, but in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinel; and yet they dare not quit their post, upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in! men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; the house of Israel cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, except the Lord keep it, the watchmen waketh but in vain, Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2.

(2.) What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchmen is to take notice, and to give notice.

1. The prophet as a watchman, must take notice of what God said concerning this people, not only concerning the body of the people, which the prophecies of Jeremiah and other prophets had most commonly reference to, but concerning particular persons, according as their character was; he must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger, and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look; *hear the word at my mouth*, ver. 17. Note, Those that are to preach, must first hear; for how can they teach others, who have not first learned themselves?

2. He must give notice of what he heard; as a watchmen must have eyes in his head, so he must have a tongue in his head; if he be dumb, it is as bad as if it were blind, Isa. lvi. 10. Thou shalt give them warning from me, sound an alarm in the holy mountain; not in his own name or as from himself, but in God's name, and from him. Ministers are God's mouth to the children of men. The scriptures are written for our admonition, by them is thy servant warned, Psalm xix. 11. But because that which is delivered viva voce commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased, by men like ourselves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word.

Now the prophet, in his preaching, must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile, and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion, which, if he did, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was, but if not he was accountable.

(1.) Some of those he had to do with were wicked, and he must warn them not to go on in their wickedness, but to turn from it, ver. 18, 19. We may observe here,

1. That the God of heaven hath said, and doth say to every wicked man, that if he go on still in his trespasses he shall surely die; his iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin, it tends to ruin, and will end in ruin: *Dying thou shalt die, thou shalt die so great a death, shalt die eternally*; be ever dying, but never dead. *The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, shall die under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it.*

2. That if a wicked man turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way, he shall live, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented; and that he may do so, he is warned of the danger he is in. *The wicked man shall die if he go on, but shall live if he repent.* Observe, he is to turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way. It is not enough for a man to turn from his wicked way by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving of him, rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn from his wickedness, from the love of it, than the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn from his wicked way, there is little hopes that he will turn from his wickedness.

3. That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin, and to assure them of the benefit of repentance; to set before them

how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of life and death, for those are the things it sets before us; the blessing and the curse, that we may escape the curse, and inherit the blessing.

4. That though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for though the watchmen did not give them warning, yet they shall die in their iniquity; for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God and their own consciences, which, if they would have taken, they might have saved their lives.

5. That if ministers be not faithful to their trust, if they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unrepented, the blood of those that perish through their carelessness, will be required at their hand, i. e. shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such precious souls perished in sin; for who knows but if they had had fair warning given them, they might have sinned in time from the wrath to come? And if it contract so heinous a guilt as it doth to be accessory to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul?

6. That if ministers do their duty in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not taken, yet they may have this satisfaction, that they are clear from their blood, and have delivered their own souls, though they cannot prevail to deliver their's. Those that are faithful shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

(2.) Some of those he had to deal with were righteous, at least he had reason to think in a judgment of charity that they were so, and he must warn them not to apostatize and turn away from their righteousness, ver. 20, 21. We may observe here,

1. That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostasy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it, and the danger they are in by it: God's servants must be warned, (Psalm xix: 11.) that they do not neglect his work and quit his service. One good means to keep us from falling is, to keep up a holy fear of falling, Heb. iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear*; and Rom. xi. 20. even those that stand by faith must not be high-minded, but fear, and must therefore be warned.

2. There is a righteousness which a man may turn from, a seeming righteousness; from which if men turn, thereby it appears that it was never sincere, how passable, nay, how plausible soever it was; for, if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; 1 John ii. 19. There are many that begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh; that set their faces heavenwards, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and turned from the holy commandment.

3. When men turn from their righteousness, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter: Omissions make way for commissions.

4. When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, it is just with God to lay stumbling-blocks before them, that they may grow worse and worse, till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he doth, in a way of righteous judgment, not only withdraw his restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts lusts, but order them by his providence into such circumstances, as occasion their sin, and hasten their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, 1 Pet. ii. 8.

5. The righteousness which men relinquish shall never be remembered to their honour or comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other: Apostates lose all that they have wrought, their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to an account, because not continued in. It is a rule in the law, *Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat*, Gal. iii. 3, 4.

6. If ministers do not give fair warning, as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to stumble and fall, the particular temptations they are in, and the fatal consequences of apostasy, the ruin of those that do apostatize will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet turn from their righteousness; but that case is not put here, as was concerning the wicked man; but on the contrary that a righteous man being warned, takes the warning, and doth not sin, ver. 31. for if you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not flatter even the righteous, as if they were perfectly safe any where on this side heaven.

7. If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both; nothing more beautiful than a wise reproof upon an obedient ear; the one shall live because he is warned, and the other has delivered his soul. What can a good minister desire more, than to save himself, and those that hear him? 1 Tim. iv. 16.

22. ¶ And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. 24. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house. 25. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: 26. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reproof: for they are a rebellious house. 27. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbear, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

After all this large and magnificent discovery which God had made of himself to the prophet, and the full instructions he had given how to deal with those to whom he sent with an ample commission, we would have expected presently to see him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Israel; but here we find it quite otherwise: His work here at first seems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

(1.) We have him here retired for further learning. By his unwillingness

ness to go, it should seem as if he were not so thoroughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that sent him to bear him out; and therefore, to hearten him against the difficulties he foresaw, God will favour him with another vision of his glory, which (if any thing) would put life unto him, and animate him for his work. In order to this, God calls him out to the plain, (ver. 22) and there he will have some talk with him. See and admire the condescension of God in conversing thus familiarly with a man, a son of man, a poor captive, nay, with a sinful man, that when God sent him, went in bitterness of spirit, and was at this time out of humour with his work! and let us own ourselves for ever indebted to the mediation of Christ for this blessed intercourse and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth. See here the benefit of solitude, and how much it befriends contemplation! It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the world for converse with him; to hear from him, to speak to him; and a good man will say, he is never less alone, than when thus alone.

Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among them of the captivity, ver. 15. for they that know what it is to have communion with God, cannot but prefer that before any converse with this world, especially such as is commonly met with. He went out into the plain, and there he saw the same vision that he had seen by the river of Chebar; for God is not tied to places. Note, Those who follow God, shall meet with his consolations wherever they go. God called him out to talk with him, but did more than that, he shewed him his glory, ver. 23. We are not now to expect such visions, but we must own we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints; *Praise ye the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) We have him here restrained from further teaching for the present. When he saw the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face, being struck with an awe of God's majesty, and a dread of his displeasure; but the spirit entered into him to raise him up, and then he recovered himself, and got upon his feet, and heard what the spirit whispered to him, which is very surprising: One would have expected now that God should send him directly to the chief place of concourse, should give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his message acceptable to them; that he should have a wider door of opportunity opened to him, and that God would give a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here said to him is the reverse of all this.

1. Instead of sending him to a public assembly, he orders him to confine himself to his own lodging; *Go, shut thyself within thy house*, ver. 24. He was not willing to appear in public, and when he did the people did not regard him, nor shew him the respect he deserved, and, as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them, and to them for their coldness towards them, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is often made our punishment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel must shut up himself, some think, to give a sign of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter. He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive further discoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he went abroad. We find that the elders of Judah visited him, and sat before him, sometimes in his house, chap. viii. 1. to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till chap. xi. 25. that he spoke to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shewed him. Note, Those that are called to preach, must find time to study, and a great deal of time too; must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so their profiting may appear to all.

2. Instead of securing him an interest in the esteem and affections of those to whom he sent him, he tells him, that they shall put lauds upon him, and bind him, ver. 25. either, 1. As a criminal, they shall bind him, in order to the further punishing of him as a disturber of the peace; though they were themselves sent into bondage in Babylon for persecuting the prophets, yet there they continue to persecute them; or rather, 2. As a distracted man, they would go about to bind him as one beside himself; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked Jehu, *Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?* Festsus said to Paul, *Thou art beside thyself*; and so they said of our Lord Jesus, *Mark iii. 21.* Perhaps this was the reason why he must keep within doors, because otherwise they would bind him, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he must not go out among them. Justly are prophets forbidden to go to those that will abuse them.

3. Instead of opening his lips, that his mouth might shew forth God's praise, God silenced him, made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, so that he was dumb for a considerable time, ver. 26. The pious captives in Babylon used this imprecation upon themselves, that if they did forget Jerusalem, their tongue might cleave to the roof of their mouth, Psalm cxxxviii. 6. Ezekiel remembers Jerusalem more than any of them, and yet his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; and he that can speak best is forbidden to speak at all; and the reason given is, because they are a rebellious house to whom he is sent, and they are not worthy to have him for a reproof: He shall not give them instructions and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them, because they are most rebellious, chap. ii. 7. but since that proves to no purpose, he is now for that reason enjoined silence, and shall not speak at all to them. Note, Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction, are justly deprived of the means of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reprov'd resolved to be deaf? If Ephraim be joined to idols, let him alone. *Thou shalt be dumb, and not be a reproof*; implying, that unless he were dumb, he would be reproving; if he could speak at all, he would witness against the wickedness of the wicked.

But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, ver. 27. Note, Though God's prophets may be silenced a while, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he saith, but opens their mouth to return an answer. Moses, that had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, *Exod. xxxiv. 34.*

4. Instead of giving him assurance of success when he should at any time speak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel must not perplex and disquiet himself about it, but let it be as it will; he that heareth, let him hear, and he is welcome to the comfort of it; let him hear, and his soul shall live; but he that forbeareth, let him forbear at his peril, and take what comes; if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, neither God nor his prophet shall be any losers by it; but the prophet shall be rewarded for his faithfulness in reproving the sinner, and God will have the glory of his justice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

VOL. II. No. CXXXII*.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon; but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts; the pious captives looked towards it with an eye of faith, as Daniel, chap. vi. 10. the presumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattered themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again; they that remained corresponded with the captives, and it is likely buoyed them up with hope; that all would be well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength; and perhaps upbraided those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore, to take down this presumption, God gives the prophet, in this chapter, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem, by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that siege. Two things are here represented to him in vision, 1. The fortifications that should be raised against the city: that is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the pourtriture of Jerusalem, ver. 1—3. and laying first on one side, and then on the other side before it, ver. 4—8. 2. The famine that should rage within the city; this is signified by his eating very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted, ver. 9—17.

1. **T**HOU also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: 2. And lay siege against it; and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. 3. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it, This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. 4. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. 5. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each a day for a year. 7. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophecy against it. 8. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

The prophet is here ordered to represent to himself and others, by signs which would be proper and powerful to strike the fancy and to affect the mind, the siege of Jerusalem, and this amounted to a prediction.

1. He was ordered to engrave a draught of Jerusalem upon a tile, ver. 1. It was Jerusalem's honour, that while she kept her integrity, God had graven her upon the palms of his hands, Isa. xlix. 15. and the names of the tribes were engraven in precious stones on the breast-plate of the high-priest; but now the faithful city is become a harlot, a worthless brittle tile or brick is thought good enough to pourtray upon: This the prophet must lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

2. He was ordered to build little forts against this pourtriture of the city, resembling the batteries raised by the besiegers, ver. 2. Between the city that was besieged and himself that was the besieger, he was to set up an iron pan, as an iron wall, ver. 3. This represented the inflexible resolution of both sides; the Chaldeans resolved, whatever it cost them, they would make themselves masters of the city, and would never quit it till they had conquered it; on the other side, the Jews resolved never to capitulate, but to hold out to the last extremity.

3. He was ordered to lie upon his side before it, as it were to surround it, representing the Chaldean army lying before it to block it up, to keep the meat from going in, and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety days, ver. 5. about thirteen months; the siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months, Jer. lii. 4, 5, 6. but if we deduct from that five months interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, Jer. xxxvii. 5, 6, 7, 8. the number of the days of the close siege will be three hundred and ninety. Yet that also had another signification; the three hundred and ninety days, according to the prophetic dialect, signified three hundred and ninety years; and when the prophet lies so many days on his side, he bears the guilt of that iniquity which the house of Israel, i. e. the ten tribes had borne three hundred and ninety years, reckoning from the first apostasy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days upon his right side, and so long to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were those which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their captivity, since the thirtieth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy, Jer. i. 1. Or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found, and the people renewed their covenant with God; when they persisted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet, and such a prince, and were brought into the bond of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Judah, that had such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of their iniquity in less time than Israel doth. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly night and day upon his side, but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received visits and company came in, he was found lying three hundred and ninety days on his left side, and forty days on his right side, before his pourtriture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily understand to mean the close besieging of that city; and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity, and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it, and to make their different remarks upon it.

His being found constantly on the same side, as if bands were laid upon him (as indeed they were by divine command) so that he could not turn him from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege, did plainly represent

represent the close and constant continuance of the besiegers about the city during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

4. He was ordered to prosecute the siege with vigour, *ver. 7. Thou shalt set thy face towards the siege of Jerusalem*, as wholly intent upon it, and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's resentment of Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his league with him, made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might chastise the insolence of that faithless prince and people; and his army promised themselves a rich booty of that pompous city, so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute. Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the *uncovering of his arm*, or, as some read it, the *stretching out of his arm*, as it were to deal blows about without mercy. When God is about to do some great work, he is said to *make bare his arm*, Isa. lii. 10. In short, The Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it as men in earnest, that resolve to go through with it.

Now, 1. This is intended to be a *sign to the house of Israel*, *ver. 3.* both to them in Babylon that were eye witnesses of what the prophet did, and to them also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was dumb, and could not speak, chap. iii. 26. but as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness; so even God then *left not himself without witness*, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men used to do, and as Zecharias did when he was dumb, and by them to *make known his mind*, that is, the mind of God to his people. And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dulness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are, by words, but must be taught as children are, by pictures, or as deaf men are, by signs. Or perhaps they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet: had he spoken in words at length what was signified by these figures, they would have intangled him in his talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to *make a man an offender for a word*, Isa. xix. 21. to avoid which, he is ordered to make use of signs. Or the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that *hearing they might hear, and not understand, and seeing they might see, and not perceive*, Matt. xiii. 14, 15. They would not understand what was plain, and thereby shall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet prophesies against Jerusalem, *ver. 7.* and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its being so represented: the images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can; and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, whilst (as the prophet here) we make use only of such signs as God himself has expressly appointed, which we must conclude are the fittest. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction and correction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite pious and devout affections; as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. *Methinks I see*, so and so, myself dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead rising, the great tribunal sit, and the like, may have a mighty good influence upon us: for fancy is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master.

3. This whole transaction hath that in it which the prophet might, with a good colour of reason, have boggled at and excepted against, and yet in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order. (1.) It seemed childish and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were those that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the divine appointment, put honour enough upon that which otherwise seemed mean, to save his reputation in the doing of it. (2.) It was toilsome and tiresome to do as he did; but our ease and credit must be sacrificed to our duty, and we must never call God's service in any instance of it a hard service. (3.) It could not but be very much against the grain with him to appear thus against Jerusalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy against a place to which he was so good a friend; but he is a prophet, and must follow his instructions, not his affections, and must plainly preach the ruin of a sinful place, though its welfare is what he passionately desires and earnestly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, is designed to bring them to repentance, by shewing them sin the provoking cause of this destruction, sin the ruin of that once flourishing city, than which sure nothing could be more effectual to make them hate sin and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and uneasiness to himself, he is *bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah*. Look here (saith he) and see what work sin makes, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God; this comes of sin, your sin and the sin of your fathers; for that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you. But observe, It is a day of punishment for a year of sin; *I have appointed thee each day for a year*. The siege is a calamity of 390 days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of 390 years; justly therefore do they acknowledge that God had *punished them less than their iniquity deserved*, Ezra ix. 13. But let impenitent sinners know, that though now God is long-suffering towards them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God laid bands upon the prophet, it was to shew them how they were bound with the cords of their own transgression, Lam. i. 14. and therefore they were now holden in the cords of affliction. But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he doth on all his ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the gospel*; and yet men laid upon him bands of restraint, chap. iii. 25. but under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

9. ¶ Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. 10. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin; from time to time shalt thou drink. 12. And thou shalt eat it as barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13. And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

14. Then said I, Ah LORD God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces, neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16. Moreover he said unto me, son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17. That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consumed away for their iniquity.

The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's desolation is Jeremiah's Lamentation of it, Lam. iv. 3, 4, &c. and chap. v. 10. where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege, and the sad effects of it. The prophet here, to affect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for 390 days to coarse fare and short commons, and that ill dressed, for they should want both food and fuel.

1. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread made of but little wheat and barley, and the rest of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, such as we feed horses or fatten hogs with, and this mixed, as mill-corn, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house, and of another at another's house; of such corn as this must the prophet's bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, *ver. 9*. Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of before we die. The meanest sort of food is better than we deserve, and therefore must not be despised or wasted, nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot.

2. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could be kept alive with, to signify that the besieged should be reduced to short allowance; and should hold out till all the bread in the city was spent, Jer. xxxvii. 21. The prophet must eat but *twenty shekels* weight of bread a day, *ver. 10.* that was about ten ounces; and he must drink but the *sixth part of a hin of water*, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, *ver. 11*. The stint of the Lussian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to spare, and was by the river side, where there was plenty of water, and yet that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obligeth him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God's servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the use of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, even the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body must be kept under and brought into subjection; nature is content with a little, grace with less, but lust with nothing: It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better bear it if ever we should come to be stinted by necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity it will become us to make much of ourselves, as those that *drank wine in bowls*, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Amos vi. 4, 5, 6.

6. For the dressing of it he must *bake it with man's dung*, *ver. 12.* that must be dried and serve for fuel to heat his oven with; the thought of it would almost turn one's stomach; yet the coarse bread thus baked he must eat as *barley cakes*, i. e. as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cookery he must exercise publicly in their sight, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have nothing that was dainty, but nothing that was cleanly about them; but must take up with what they could get. *To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*.

This circumstance of the sign, the baking of his bread with man's dung, the prophet with submission humbly desired might be dispensed with, *ver. 14.* it seemed to have in it something of a ceremonial pollution, for there was a law that man's dung should be covered with earth, that God might see no unclean thing in their camp, Deut. xxiii. 13, 14. And must he go gather a thing so offensive, and use it in the dressing his meat in the sight of the people? Ah, Lord God, saith he, behold, my soul, has not been polluted, and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted. Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than any thing; and yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, Matt. xv. 11. But observe, He doth not plead, Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never used to any thing but what was clean and nice; and there were those who were so brought up that in the siege of Jerusalem did embrace dunghills, Lam. iv. 5. but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that *died of itself*, or was *torn in pieces*; and therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now: thus Peter pleaded, Acts x. 14. *Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean*. Note, It will be comfortable to us when we are reduced to hardships if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the appearances of evil. Whatever God commands us we may be sure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that we apprehend to be evil, we should argue against it from this consideration, that hitherto we have preserved our purity, and shall we lose it now? Now, because Ezekiel with a manifest tenderness of conscience made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this matter. Note, Those who have power in their hands should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea though their dissatisfaction be groundless, or arising from education and long usage, but should recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a stumbling-block before them; in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incontestible, and all his commands wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use cow's dung, instead of man's dung, *ver. 15*. This is an implicit reflection upon man, as intimating, that he being polluted with sin, his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature; *How much more abominable and filthy is man?* Job xv. 16.

Now this sign is particularly explained here; it signified,

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food; all supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find a want of the country, for the king himself is *servant of the field*; and thus the staff of bread would be broken in Jerusalem, *ver. 15*. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that they shall eat and not be satisfied, Lev. xxvi. 26. but take away the

the bread itself, *Iz. iii. 1.* So that what little remained should be eaten by weight, to much a day, so much a head, that they might have an equal share, and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose, when they could not make it last always; and the besieged must be tired out by the besiegers? They shall eat and drink with care, to make it go as far as might be, and with astonishment, when they saw it almost spent, and knew not which way to look for a recruit. They shall be astonished one with another; whereas it used to be some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it, (*Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*) and some ease to the spirit to complain of the burden; it should be an aggravation of the misery that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy and increase their astonishment; and the event shall be as ill as their fears, they cannot make it worse than it is, for they shall consume away for their iniquity; multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by the sword, *Lam. v. 9.* they shall die so as to feel themselves die; and it is sin that brings all this misery upon them; they shall consume away in their iniquity, so it may be read. They shall continue hardened and impenitent, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill.

Now, (1.) Let us see here what worful work sin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteousness of God herein. Time was when Jerusalem was filled with the finest of the wheat, *Psal. cxlvii. 14.* but now it would be glad of the coarsest and cannot have it. Fulness of bread, as it was one of Jerusalem's mercies, so it was become one of her sins, *Ezek. xvi. 49.* The plenty was abused to luxury and excess, which was therefore thus justly punished with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of those enjoyments which we have made the fuel and food of our lusts.

(2.) Let us see what reason we have to bless God for plenty; not only for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce, that the husbandmen can have money for his bread and the tradesmen bread for his money; that there is not only abundance in the field but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they sow not, neither do they reap, yet are fed from day to day with food convenient.

2. It signified that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, *ver. 13. i. e.* to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call defiled, and which they would have as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung, that is, (as perhaps it may be understood) kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to pulse and water, rather than they would eat the portion of the king's meat assigned them, because they apprehended it would defile them, *Dan. i. 8.* or they should be forced to eat nasty stinking meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery; and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they served not God with cheerfulness in the abundance of all things, God will make them serve their enemies in the want of all things.

C. H. A. P. V.

In this chapter we have a farther and no less terrible denunciation of the judgments of God that were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it, for when God judgeth he will overcome. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here, (1.) Represented by a sign, the cutting and burning, and scattering of hair, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) That sign is expounded and applied to Jerusalem. 1. Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation, contempt of God's law, *ver. 5—7.* and profanation of his sanctuary, *ver. 11. 2.* Wrath is threatened, great wrath, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* a variety of miseries, *ver. 12—16, 17.* such as should be their reproach and ruin, *ver. 13—15.*

1. **A**ND thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. 2. Thou shalt burp with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them. 3. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. 4. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

We have here the signs by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart, even then when he foretold the desolations of it, he was so much concerned about it, as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woeful day.

1. He must shave off the hair of his head and beard, *ver. 1.* which signifies God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people, as a useless worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; his judgments, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off were this sharp knife and this razor, that were proper to be made use of and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but being degenerated was become as the hair, which when it grows thick and long is but a burden which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners in Zion; *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, Isa. i. 24.* Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but cut it all off, noting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed, and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the prophets, must all be shaved off by an utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

2. He must weigh the hair, and divide it into three parts. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity; by him men and their actions are weighed in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness; and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment, and others by another, but one way or other they shall all be met with. Some make the waving of the hair to note the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was lucked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanun put on David's ambassadors; it notes also the loss of their joy, for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazariteship, for the shaving of the

head was a period to that vow; *Numb. vi. 8.* and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a holy city.

3. He must dispose of the hair so as that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, *ver. 2.* (1.) One third part must be burnt in the midst of the city, noting the multitude that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the conflagration of the city, when the days of the siege were fulfilled; or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. (2.) Another third part was to be cut in pieces with a knife, representing that many that, during the siege, were slain by their sword, in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious and the Jews most feeble. (3.) Another third part was to be scattered in the wind, noting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror, and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter; so that they were hurried some one way and some another, like those hairs in the wind. But lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, and I will draw out a sword after them; so that wherever they go evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people, and to make an end when he begins.

4. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be scattered in the wind, and bind them in his skirts, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, *ver. 3.* This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who it was hoped would keep possession of the land when the body of the people were carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved must be taken and cast into the fire, *ver. 5.* When Gedaliah and his friends were slain, the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and in short the land totally cleared of them, then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions a fire came forth into all the house of Israel; who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled, and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy, for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

5. ¶ Thus saith the Lord God; This is Jerusalem; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. 6. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. 9. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations. 10. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgment in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. 11. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity. 12. ¶ A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. 13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted; and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. 14. Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. 15. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it. 16. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread: 17. So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

We have here the reddition of the foregoing similitude; This is Jerusalem: Thus it is usual in Scripture language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, This is my body. The prophet's head that was to be shaved signified Jerusalem, that by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be set naked and bare, to be shaved with a razor that is hired, *Isa. vii. 20.* The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person was fited to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these

these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and it shall in the writings of the prophets. Here is,

1. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with, ver. 5. *I have set in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her*, and those famous nations are very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than so. (1.) Jerusalem was dignified and preferred above the neighbour nations, and their cities, it was *set in the midst of them* as excelling them all, *this holy mountain was exalted above all the hills*, Isa. iii. 2. *Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in*, Psalm lxxviii. 10. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbour nations had an eye upon, some for good-will, some for ill-will. (2.) Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon the nations and countries round about, was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbour nations, that from them it might diffuse itself farther, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent statutes and judgments they had, concluding them to be a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 Kings iv. 34. And had they preserved this reputation, and made a right use of it, what a blessing had Jerusalem been to all the nations about it? But failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, when out of Zion went forth the gospel law, and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem, and there repentance and remission began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them went forth into all nations. And when that was done Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good, and that those about them may be the better for them; that their light may shine before men.

2. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God in seizing its privileges, and putting it under military execution.

(1.) She had not walked in God's statutes, nor kept his judgments, ver. 7. nay, they had refused his judgments and his statutes, ver. 6. they did not do their duty, nay, they would not, they said they would not: those statutes and judgments which their neighbours admired, they despised; which they should have set before their face, they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men, they that refuse his terms cannot expect his favours.

(2.) She had changed God's judgments into wickedness, ver. 6. a very high expression of their profaneness, that they had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them, that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness; they introduced the abominable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing the truth of God into a lie, Rom. i. 25. and the glory of God into shame, Psalm iv. 2. Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the patron of sin, and his judgments were turned into wickedness.

(3.) She had been worse than the neighbour nations, to whom she should have set a good example: *She hath changed my judgments*, by idolatries and false worship, *more than the nations*, ver. 6. and multiplied, i. e. multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied those things, the unity of which was their praise, *more than the nations that were round about*. Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they not content with this one God multiplied their gods to that degree, that according to the number of their cities, so were their gods, and their altars as heaps in the furrows of the field: so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having gods many and lords many. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note, If those that have made a profession of religion, and have had a pious education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have *seven other spirits more wicked*.

(4.) She had not done according to the judgments of the nations, ver. 7. i. e. they had not carried it towards their God, though he is the only true God, as the nations had carried it towards their gods, though they were false gods; had not been so observant of him, nor so constant to him. Hath a nation changed their gods, or slighted them, so as they have? Jer. ii. 11. Or it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbours, they came short of them; and many that were of the uncircumcision, kept the righteousness of the law better than those that were of the circumcision, Rom. ii. 26, 27. Those that had the light of Scripture did not according to the judgments of many that had only the light of nature. Note, There are those who are called Christians that will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens.

(5.) The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is profaning the holy things, which she had been both intrusted and honoured with, ver. 11. *Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things*, i. e. with thine idols and images. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God; thus every thing that is sacred was polluted. Note, Idols are detestable things any where, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

3. The punishments that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations; *Shall not God visit for these things?* No doubt he shall. The matter of the sentence here past upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so; the judgments are various, and the threatenings of them varied, reiterated, inculcated; that one may well say, *Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?*

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and who knows the power of his anger? and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Observe, what a mighty emphasis is laid upon it, ver. 8. *I, even I, am against thee*. God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he is turned to be its enemy, and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead. You think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is *I, even I, that am against thee*: not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence; *I will execute judgments in thee*, ver. 10. *in the midst of thee*, ver. 8. not only in the suburbs, but in the heart of the city; not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country. Note, Those that will not observe the judgments of God's mouth, shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst

of a people, will enter into the soul; into the bowels like water, and like oil into the bones; *I will execute judgments*. Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people it shall not be a correction in love, but he will execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes, ver. 15. strange expressions to come from a God, who hath said, *Fury is not in me*; and who hath declared himself gracious and merciful and slow to anger: But they are designed to shew the malignity of sin, and the offence it gives to the just and holy God. That must needs be a very evil thing which provokes him to such resentments, and against his own people too, that had been so high in his favour, and expressed with so much satisfaction, ver. 13. *Mine anger, which has long been withheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them*, it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath, fitted by their own wickedness to destruction, and justice being hereby glorified, *I will be comforted*, i. e. I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done. As when God is dishonoured by the sins of men he is said to be grieved, Psalm xcvi. 10. so when he is honoured by their destruction he is said to be comforted. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed; for mercy that has been so long abused is now silent and gives up the case, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful incorrigible people; *mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity*, ver. 11. Divine compassion deters the punishment or mitigates it, or supports under it or shortens it, but here is judgment without mercy, wrath without any mixture or alloy of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened, perhaps with design to look further to the vengeance of eternal fire, which some of the destructions we read of in the Old Testament were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is no where on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, *Mine eye shall not spare, but I will cause my fury to rest*. Note, Those that live and die impenitent, will perish for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when the Lord will not spare.

3. Punishments shall be public and open; *I will execute these judgments in the sight of the nations*, ver. 8. the judgments themselves shall be so remarkable, as that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them; they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and the more for the conspicuousness of the place and people on which they are inflicted. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs, *them that sin rebuke before all*, so if those prevail not, they call for public judgments: *He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others*, Job xxxiv. 26. that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descants upon it here) *why should he suffer it to be said, See what wicked lives they lead, that profess to be the worshippers of the only true God!* And as the publicness of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, 1. To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavy. Jerusalem being made waste, becomes a reproach among the nations in the sight of all that pass by, ver. 14. The more conspicuous and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their prosperity, the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been a praise in the earth, the more it is now a reproach and a taunt, ver. 15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, 1 Kings ix. 8. and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, Lam. ii. 15. 2. To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they saw what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punisheth sin, even in those that are nearest to him. *It shall be an instruction to the nations*, ver. 15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but she not doing that, God will teach it them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, *If this be done in the green trees, what shall be done in the dry?* If judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If they be thus punished that only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us that are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malefactors are publicly punished in terror, that others may take warning.

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. 1. They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon, ver. 9. *I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before*, though thou hast long since deserved it; nay that which I have not done in any other city; this punishment of Jerusalem is said to be greater than that of Sodom, Lam. iv. 6. which was the forest of all that went before it; nay, it is such as *I will not do any more the like*, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like comes to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was none like him, before or after him. 2. They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God, ver. 10. *The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat their fathers*, through the extremity of the famine, or compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors. 3. There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague, ver. 12. *the pestilence shall pass through thee*, ver. 17. sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others shall be consumed with famine, shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption, ver. 12. this is again insisted on, ver. 16. *I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine*; hunger shall pine and pierce them, and wound them to the heart, as if arrows, evil arrows, poisoned darts were shot into them; God has many arrows, evil arrows, in his quiver, when some are discharged he hath still more in reserve. *I will increase the famine upon you*; a famine in a bereaved country may decrease, as fruits spring forth, but a famine in a besieged city will increase of course; yet God speaks of it as his act: *I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread*; will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint you of all that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy, but you must fall to the ground. Life is frail, is weak, is burdened, so that if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is soon gone if that staff be broken. Others shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem, when they fall out upon the besiegers; it is a sword which God will bring, ver. 17. The sword of the Lord that used to be drawn for Jerusalem's defence, is now drawn for its destruction. Others are devoured by evil beasts, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains; they shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no out-running the judgments of God, ver. 17. And lastly, those that escape shall be scattered into all parts of the world, into all the winds, so it is expressed, ver. 10—12. intimating, that they should not only be dispersed, but hurried, and tossed, and driven to and fro as chaff before the wind: Nay, and Cain's curse, to be fugitives and vagabonds, is not the worst of it neither, their restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death *I will draw out a sword after them*, which shall follow them where-

ever they go; *evil pursues sinners*; and the curse shall come upon them, and overtake them.

5. These punishments will prove their ruin by degrees; they shall be *diminished*, ver. 11. their strength and glory shall grow less and less; they shall be *breached*, ver. 17. emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence; God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, ver. 16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but for their destruction, for God will *accomplish his fury upon them*, ver. 13. the day of God's patience is over, and the ruin is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now presently in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only, *this is Jerusalem*, we may well suppose that it looks further to the final destruction of that great city by the Romans, when God made a full end of the Jewish nation, and *caused his fury to rest upon them*.

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity; *I the Lord have spoken it*, ver. 15. and again, ver. 17. the sentence is passed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth, whose judgment is according to truth, and the judgments of his hand according to the judgments of his mouth: He hath spoken it who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible; He hath spoken it who will do it, for he is not a man that he should lie; He hath spoken it whom we are bound to hear and heed; whose *ipse dixit* commands the most serious attention and submissive assent: *And they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it*, ver. 13. There were those who thought it was only the prophet that spoke it in his delirium, but God will make them know, by the accomplishment of it, that he had spoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove itself.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A threatening of the destruction of Israel for their idolatry, and the destruction of their idols with them, ver. 1—7. 2. A promise of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation, ver. 8—10. 3. Directions given to the prophet and other the Lord's servants, to lament both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel, ver. 11—14.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me; saying; 2. Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3. And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. 4. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. 5. And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. 6. In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate; and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. 7. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Here, 1. The prophecy is directed to the mountains of Israel, ver. 1, 2. the prophet must set his face towards them; if he could see so far off as the land of Israel, the mountains of that land would be the first and farthest seen; towards them therefore he must look, and look boldly and steadfastly, as the judge looks at the prisoner and directs his speech to him, when he passeth sentence upon him. Though the mountains of Israel be never so high and never so strong, he must set his face against them, as having judgments to denounce that should shake their foundation. The mountains of Israel had been holy mountains, but now they had polluted them with their high places, God sets his face against them, and therefore the prophet must. Israel is here put, not as sometimes, for the ten tribes, but for the whole land. The mountains are called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to shame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as soon gain attention from the mountains, as from that rebellious and gainsaying people to whom they all day long stretched out their hands in vain. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, Micah vi. 1, 2. for God's cause will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no: But from the mountains the word of the Lord echoes to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; for to them also the Lord God speaks; intimating that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered; and shall be witnesses against this people that they had fair warning given them of the judgment's coming, but they would not take it; nay, they contradicted the message, and persecuted the messengers, so that God's prophets might more safely and comfortably speak to the hills and mountains than to them.

2. That which is threatened in this prophecy is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander in chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel; it is he that saith, Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, ver. 3. the sword of the Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the desolations of that war,

(1.) The idols and all their appurtenances should be destroyed. The high places, which were on the tops of mountains, ver. 3. these shall be levelled, and made desolate, ver. 6. they shall not be beautified, shall not be frequented as they had been; the altars, on which they offered sacrifice and burnt incense to strange gods, shall be broken to pieces and laid waste; the images and idols shall be defaced, shall be broken and cease, and be cut down, and all the fine costly works about them shall be abolished, ver. 4—6. Observe here, 1. That war makes woeful desolations, which those persons, places and things, that were esteemed most sacred, cannot escape; for the sword devours one as well as another. 2. That God sometimes ruins idolaters even by the hands of idolaters, for such the Chaldeans themselves were; but, as if the deity was a local thing, the greatest admirers of the gods of their own country, were the greatest despisers of the gods of other countries. 3. It is just with God to make that a desolation which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God, and will not bear a rival. 4. If men do not, as they ought, destroy idolatry, God will first or last find out a way to do it. When Josiah had destroyed the high places, altars and images, with the sword of justice, they set them up again, but God will now destroy them with the sword of war, and let us see who dares re-establish them.

(2.) The worshippers of idols and all their adherents should be destroyed likewise. As all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwelling-places too, even all their cities, ver. 6. They that profane God's dwelling-place as they had done, can expect no other but that he should abandon theirs, chap. v. 11. If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 17. It is here threatened, that their slain shall fall in the midst of them, ver. 7. there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe; but it is added as a remarkable circumstance; that they shall fall before their idols, ver. 4. that their dead carcases should be laid, and their bones scattered about their altars, ver. 5. 1. Thus their idols should be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies, which they had had in veneration. If they will not desile the covering of their graven images, God will, Isa. xxx. 22. The throwing of the carcases among them, as upon the dunghill, intimates that they were but dunghill deities. 2. Thus it was intimated, that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the living God; for the carcases of dead men that like them have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, were the fittest company for them. 3. Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to hear their worshippers, and idolaters upbraided with the folly of trusting in them: for it should seem they fell by the sword of the enemy then, when they were actually before their idols, imploring their aid, and putting themselves under their protection: Sennacherib was slain by his sons then when he was worshipping in the house of his god. 4. The sin might be read in this circumstance of the punishment; the slain men are cast before their idols, to shew that therefore they are slain, because they worshipped those idols: See Jer. viii. 2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images: Let them see it, and know that God is the Lord, i. e. that the Lord he is God, and he alone.

8. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. 9. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes; which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. 10. And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in these verses mercy rejoiceth against judgment: a sad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end: The ruin seems to be universal, and yet will I leave a remnant, a little remnant, distinguished from the body of the people, a few of many; such as are left when the rest perish; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates, that they deserved to have been cut off with the rest, and had been cut off, if God had not left them. See Isa. i. 9. And it is God who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in sparing them. Now,

(1.) It is a preserved remnant, saved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in, ver. 8. that he may have some that shall escape the sword. God had said chap. v. 12. that he would draw a sword after them that were scattered, that destruction should pursue them in their dispersions; but here is mercy remembered in the midst of that wrath; and a promise that some of the Jews of the dispersion, as they were afterwards called, should escape the sword. None of those that were to fall by the sword about Jerusalem shall escape, for they trust to Jerusalem's walls for security, and shall be made ashamed of that vain confidence; but some of them shall escape the sword among the nations, where being deprived of all other stays, they stay themselves upon God only. They are said to have those that do escape, for they shall be the seed of another generation, out of which Jerusalem shall flourish again.

(2.) It is a penitent remnant, ver. 9. They that escape of you shall remember me. Note, To those whom God designs for life, he will give repentance unto life: They are reprieved, and escape the sword, that they may have time to return to God. Note, God's patience both leaves room for repentance, and is an encouragement to sinners to repent. Where God designs grace to repent, he allows space to repent, yet many that have the space want the grace, many that escape the sword, do not forsake the sin, as it is promised these here shall do. This remnant here marked for salvation, is a type of the remnant reserved out of the body of mankind to be monuments of mercy, which are made safe in the same way that these were, by being brought to repentance. Now observe here,

1. The occasion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy: judgment, that they were carried captives; but mercy that they escaped the sword in the land of their captivity; they were driven out of their own land, but not out of the land of the living; not chased out of the world, as others were, and they deserved to be. Note, The consideration of the just rebukes of providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, should engage us to repent, that we may answer God's end in both. And true repentance shall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our troubles; nay sanctified afflictions often prove means of conversion, as to Manasseh.

2. The root and principle of their repentance: They shall remember me among the nations. They that forgot God in the land of their peace and prosperity, waxed fat, and kicked, were brought to remember him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal son never bethought himself of his father's house till he was ready to perish for hunger in the far country. Their remembering God was the first step they took in returning to him. Note, When there begins to be some hopes of sinners, when they begin to think of him whom they have sinned against, and to inquire, Where is God my maker? Sin takes rise in forgetting God, Jer. iii. 21. Repentance takes rise from the remembrance of him, and of our obligations to him. God saith, They shall remember me, i. e. I will give them grace to do so; for otherwise they would for ever forget him: That grace shall find them out wherever they are, and by bringing God to their mind, shall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembered his father, remembered how he had sinned against heaven, and before him: so do these penitents.

(1.) They remembered the hate affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenuous repentance fastens upon and most sadly laments. They had departed from God to idols, and given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They departed from God, from his word, which they should have made their rule; from his work, which they should have made their business; their hearts departed from him. The heart, which he requires and insists upon, and

without which *bodily exercise profits nothing*; the heart, which should be set upon him and carried out towards him, when that *departs from him*, it is as the treacherous elopement of a wife from her husband, or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. *Their eyes also go after their idols*, they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. *Their hearts followed their eyes* in the choice of their gods, they must have gods that they could see, and then *their eyes followed their hearts* in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this sin is, that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a *whorish heart that departs from God*; and they are eyes that go a *whoring after their idols*. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom: it is the breach of a marriage covenant with God; it is the setting of the affections upon that which is a rival with, and the indulgence of a base lust which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he repented it. They shall remember that *I am broken with their whorish heart, and their eyes that are full of this spiritual adultery*; not only angry at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so dishonourably dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful carriage of a rebellious and disobedient son, which sinks his spirits, and makes him to stoop. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*, Psalm xcvi. 10. *God's measures were broken*, so some; a stop was put to the current of his favours towards them, and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall affect and humble them more than any thing, not so much that their peace was broken, and their country broken, as that *God was broken by their sin*. Thus they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, Zech. xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much, as to think that his sin hath been a grief to God, and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance: *They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations*. Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been broken by their whorish heart; yet he would not quite cast them off: See *Ish. lvii. 17, 18. Hos. ii. 13, 14*. His goodness takes occasion from their badness to appear the more illustrious. Note, 1. True penitents see sin to be an abominable thing, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*, and which makes sinners and even their services odious to him, *Jer. xlv. 4. Isa. i. 11*. It defiles the sinner's own conscience, and makes him, unless he be past feeling, an abomination to himself. An idol is particularly called an *abomination*, *Isa. xlv. 19*. Those gratifications which the hearts of sinners were set upon as delectable things, the hearts of penitents are turned against as detestable things. 2. There are many evils committed in these abominations, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them; many transgressions in one sin, *Lev. xvi. 21*. In their idolatries they were sometimes guilty of whoredom, as in the worship of Peor; sometimes of murder, as in the worship of Moloch; these were evils committed in their abominations. Or, it notes the great malignity there is in sin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it. 3. Those that truly loathe sin, cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to themselves till they have some ground to hope that God is reconciled to them; nay, then they shall lie down in their shame when he is pacified towards them, *Ezek. xvi. 1*.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance, *ver. 10*. *They shall know that I am the Lord*, i. e. they shall be convinced of it by experience, and shall be ready to own it, and that *I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them*, finding that what I have said is made good, and made to work for good, and to answer a good intention, and that it was not without just provocation that they were thus threatened and thus punished. Note, 1. One way or other God will make sinners to know and own that he is the Lord, either by their repentance or by their ruin. 2. All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them, and in the accomplishment of them.

11. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. 12. He that is far off shall die by the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. 13. Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. 14. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them.

1. He must by his gestures in preaching express the deep sense he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the house of Israel, *ver. 11*. *Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot*; thus he must make it to appear that he was in earnest in what he said to them, that he firmly believed it and laid it to heart; thus he must signify the just displeasure he had conceived at their sins, and the just dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject this use of these gestures, and call them antic and ridiculous; but God bids him use them because they might help to enforce the word upon some, and give it the setting on; and those that know the worth of souls, will be content to be laughed at by the wits, so they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet must thus lament: 1. National sins. *Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel*. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God's faithful servants, especially the evil abominations of the house of Israel, whose sins are more abominable and have more evil in them than the sins of others. *Alas! what will be in the end hereof?* 2. National judgments. To punish them for these abominations, *they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence*. Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own sins and sufferings,

but with the sins and sufferings of others; and to look with compassion upon the miseries that wicked people bring upon themselves; as Christ beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it.

2. He must inculcate what he had said before concerning the destruction that was coming upon them.

(1.) They shall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments, which shall find them out, and follow them wherever they are, *ver. 12*. *He that is far off*, and thinks himself out of danger, because out of the reach of the Chaldean arrows, yet shall find himself not out of the reach of God's arrows; which fly day and night, *Psal. xci. 5*. *he shall die of the pestilence*; he that is near a place of strength, which he hopes will be to him a place of safety, yet shall fall by the sword, before he can retreat; he that is so cautious, as not to venture out, but remains in the city, there he shall die by the famine, the saddest death of all: Thus will God accomplish his fury, i. e. do all that against them which he had purposed to do.

(2.) They shall read their sin in their punishment; for their slain men shall be among their idols, round about their altars, as was threatened before, *ver. 5, 6, 7*. There, where they had prostrated themselves in honour of their idols, God will lay them dead, to their own approach, and the reproach of their idols: They lived among them, and shall die among them: They had offered sweet odours to their idols, but there shall their dead carcases send forth a stinking smell, as it were to atone for that misplaced incense.

(3.) The country shall be all laid waste, as before the cities, *ver. 6*. *I will make the land desolate*. That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be desolate, more desolate than the wilderness towards Diblath, *ver. 14*. Diblathaim it is called, *Numb. xxxiii. 46. Jer. xlviii. 22*, that great and terrible wilderness which is described, *Deut. viii. 15*, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions. The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren, desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated that altars may be laid waste, and made desolate, *ver. 6*. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing, therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly foretold, in affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it. The prophet must tell them, 1. That it will be a final ruin, a complete utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end, *ver. 1—6*. 2. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door, *ver. 7—10*. 3. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves, *ver. 10—15*. 4. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it, *ver. 16—19*. 5. That the temple, which they trusted in, should itself be ruined, *ver. 20—22*. 6. That it should be an universal ruin, the sin that brought it having been universal, *ver. 23—27*.

1. **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto-me, saying, 2. Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3. Now is the end come unto thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. 4. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 5. Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. 6. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. 7. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land, the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the founding again of the mountains. 8. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. 9. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth. 10. Behold the day, behold, it is come, the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. 11. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor any of their's: neither shall there be wailing for them. 12. The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 13. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life. 14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 15. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

We have here fair warning given of the destruction of the land of Israel, which was now hastening on apace: God, by the prophet, not only sends notice of it, but will have it inculcated in the same expressions, to shew that the thing is certain, that it is near, that the prophet is himself affected with it, and desires they should be so too, but finds them deaf and stupid, and

and unaffected. When the town is on fire, men do not seek for fine words and quaint expressions, in which to give an account of it, but cry about the streets with a loud and lamentable voice, Fire, fire; so the prophet here proclaims, *An end, an end, it is come, it is come, behold, it is come: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

1. *An end is come, the end is come*, ver. 2. and again, ver. 6. and ver. 3. *Now is the end come upon thee; the end*, which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophets he had asked them, *What will ye do in the end hereof; the end*, which all the foregoing judgments had been working towards, as means to bring it about, their ruin shall now be completed; or the end, that is the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation; as the deluge was the end of all flesh, Gen. vi. 13. They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should shortly see an end of their troubles; yea, faith God, *An end is come*, but a miserable one, not the expected end, which is promised to the pious remnant among them, Jer. xxix. 11. *It is the end, that end*, which you have been so often warned of; *that last end*, which Moses wished you to consider, Deut. xxxii. 29. and which, because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully, Lam. i. 9. This end was long in coming, but now it is come: Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely: *It is come*, it watcheth for thee, ready to receive thee. This perhaps looks further to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of; and still further, to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly: *The end of all things is at hand*; and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 3. O that we could all see that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot in the end of the days! Dan. xii. 13. *This end comes upon the four corners of the land*; the ruin, as it shall be final, so it shall be total; no part of the land shall escape; no not that which lies most remote; such will the destruction of the world be; all these things shall be dissolved; such will the destruction of sinners be; none can avoid it. *O that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end*, before it bring them to an end!

2. *An evil, an only evil, behold it is come*, ver. 5. Sin is an evil, an only evil, an evil that has no good in it; it is the worst of evils; but this is spoken of the evil of trouble; it is an evil; one evil, and that one shall suffice to affect and complete the ruin of the nation, there needs no more to do its business; this one shall make an utter end, affliction needs not rise up a second time, Neh. i. 2. *It is an evil without precedent or parallel*, an evil that stands alone, you cannot produce such another instance: it is to the impenitent an evil, an only evil, it hardens their hearts, and irritates their corruptions; whereas there were those to whom it was sanctified by the grace of God, and made a means of much good; they were sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5. The wicked have the dregs of that cup to drink, which to the righteous is full of mixtures of mercy, Psalm lxxv. 8. The same affliction is to us either a half evil, or an only evil, according as we carry ourselves under it and make use of it: But when an end, the end is come upon the wicked world, then an evil, an only evil comes upon it, and not till then. The forest of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are an evil, an only evil.

3. *The time is come*, the set time for the inflicting of this only evil, and the making of this full end; for to all God's purposes there is a time, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpose will have its accomplishment; particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their deserts, is fixed; *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; and he sees, whether we see it or no, that his day is coming. This they are here told of again and again, ver. 10. *Behold, the day*, that has lingered so long, is come at last, behold, it is come: *The time is come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near*, ver. 7—12. Though threatened judgments may be long deferred, yet they shall not be dropped, the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off, nothing but man's sincere repentance and reformation will put them by. *The morning is come upon thee*, ver. 7. and again, ver. 10. *The morning is gone forth*; the day of trouble dawns, the day of destruction is already begun. *The morning* discovers that which was hidden; they thought their secret sins should never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They used to try and execute malefactors in the morning, and such a morning of judgment and execution is now coming upon them, a day of trouble to sinners, the year of their visitation. See how stupid these people were, that though the day of their destruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but must be thus told of it again and again! *The day of trouble, real trouble, is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains*, i. e. not a meer echo of report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundless surmise, as if the men that came against them were but the shadows of the mountains, as Zebul suggested to Gaal, Judges ix. 36. and the intelligence they received were but an empty sound, reverberated from the mountains. No, the trouble is not a fancy, and so you will soon find.

3. All this comes from God's wrath, not allayed, as sometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy: This is the fountain from which all these calamities flow; and this is the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery, which makes it bitter indeed, ver. 3. *I will send mine anger upon thee*. Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it doth not break out but when he pleaseth, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it and gives it commission. The expression riseth higher, ver. 8. *Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee in full vials, and accomplish mine anger*, all the purposes and all the product of it upon thee. This wrath doth not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof, ver. 12, 14. the whole body of the nation is become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God doth sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he saith, *Mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity*, ver. 4. and again, ver. 9. they shall have judgment without mercy, that made light of mercy when it was offered them.

5. All this is the just punishment of their sins, and it is what they have by their own folly brought upon themselves. This is much insisted on here, that they might be brought to justify God in all he had brought upon them. God never sends his anger but in wisdom and justice, and therefore it follows, *I will judge thee according to thy ways*, ver. 3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law, and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and recompense them to thee, ver. 4. Note, In the heaviest judgments God inflicts upon sinners, he doth but recompense their own ways upon them; they are beaten with their own rod. And when God comes to reckon with a sinful people, he will bring every provocation to account; *I will recompense thee upon all thine abominations*, ver. 3. and now thine iniquity shall be found to be hateful, Psalm xxxvi. 2. and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee, ver. 4. i. e. the secret wickedness shall now be brought to light, and that shall appear to have been in the midst of thee, which before was not suspected; and thy sin shall now become an abomination to thyself; so the abomination of iniquity will be, when it comes to be an abomination of desolation, Matt. xxiv. 15. Or, thine abominations, i. e. the punishments of them, shall be in the

midst of thee, i. e. they shall reach to thy heart: See Jer. iv. 18. O therefore, God will not spare, nor have pity, because even then when he is recompensing their ways upon them, yet in their distress they trespass yet more; their abominations are still in the midst of them, indulged and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again, ver. 8, 9. *I will judge thee, I will recompense thee*.

Two sins are particularly instanced in as provoking God to bring those judgments upon them, pride and oppression. 1. God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves: *The rod of affliction hath blossomed*, but it was pride that budded, ver. 10. What buds in sin, will blossom in some judgment or other: The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring. 2. Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another, ver. 11. *Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness*, i. e. their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government was become a rod of wickedness; to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up: *I saw the place of judgment that wickedness was there*, Eccles. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain our sin is the root of them.

6. There is no escape from these judgments, nor fence against them, for they shall be universal, and shall bear down all before them, without remedy.

(1.) Death in its various shapes shall ride triumphantly, both in town and country, both within the city, and without it, ver. 15. Men shall be safe no where, for he that is in the field shall die by the sword, every field shall be to them a field of battle; and he that is in the city, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but famine and pestilence shall devour him; Sin had abounded both in city and country, *Ihuco intra muros peccatur & extra*, and therefore in both desolations are made.

(2.) None of those that are marked for death shall escape; there shall none of them remain; none of those proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness, none of them shall be left, but they shall all be swept away by the desolation that is coming, ver. 11. *None of their multitude*, i. e. of the rabble, whom they set on to do mischief, and to countenance them in doing it; to cry, Crucify, crucify such as they were resolved to run down; none of them shall remain, nor none of their's; their families shall all be destroyed, and neither root nor branch left them; this multitude, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner fasten upon; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof, ver. 12—14. and the vision was touching all the multitude thereof, ver. 13. the bulk of the common people; the judgments coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure themselves nor their masters, whole creatures and tools they were: God's judgments, when they come with commission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. *Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished*.

(3.) Those that fall shall not be lamented, ver. 11. *there shall be no wailing for them*, for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening apace after them: and the times shall be so bad, that men shall rather congratulate than condole the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing these desolations, and staring in them, Jer. xvi. 4, 5.

(4.) They shall not be able to make any resistance. The decree is gone forth, and the vision concerning them shall not return, ver. 13. God will not recall it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it shall not return retracted, but shall accomplish that for which he sends it. God's word will take place, and then, 1. Particular persons cannot make their part good against God; no man shall strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life, i. e. it will be to no purpose for sinners to set God and his judgments at defiance as they used to do; none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered: Those that strengthen themselves in their wickedness, will be found not only to weaken but to ruin themselves, Psalm lii. 7. 2. The multitude cannot resist the torrent of these judgments, nor make head against them, ver. 14. *They have blown the trumpet*, to call their soldiers together, and to animate and encourage those whom they have got together; and thus they think to make all ready, but all in vain, none lift themselves, and those that do have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be against us, none can be for us to do us any service.

(5.) They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity; they shall have given up all for gone, and therefore let not the buyer rejoice, that he is increasing his estate, and is become a purchaser; neither let the seller mourn, that he is lessening his estate, and is become a bankrupt, ver. 11. See the vanity of all the things of this world, and how worthless they are! that in a time of trouble when we have most need of them, we may perhaps make least account of them; They that have sold are the most easy, having the less to lose; and they that have bought have increased their own cares and fears: Because the fashion of this world passeth away, let those that buy be as those that possessed not, because they know not how soon they may be dispossessed, 1 Cor. vii. 29. It is added, ver. 12. *The seller shall not return*, at the year of jubilee, to that which is sold, according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pestilence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritance shall be enjoyed here, till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again, in the belief of which, Jeremiah about this time bought his uncle's field, yet according to the charge, the buyer did not rejoice, but complain, Jer. xxxii. 25.

Lastly, God will be glorified in all: *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*, ver. 4. that *I am the Lord that smiteth*, ver. 9. You look at second causes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that smites you, but you shall be made to know he is but the staff, it is the hand of the Lord that smiteth you; and who knows the weight of his hand? Those who would not know it was the Lord that did them good, shall be made to know it is the Lord that smiteth them; for one way or other he will be owned.

16. ¶ But they that escape of them, shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. 17. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. 18. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them, and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. 19. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity. 20. ¶ As for the beauty of his ornament, he set

set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations, and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them. 21. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil, and they shall pollute it. 22. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it and defile it.

We have attended the fate of those that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of those that have an opportunity of outrunning the danger; some of them shall escape, ver. 16. but what the better? as good die once, as in a miserable life die a thousand deaths, and escape only like Cain, to be fugitives and vagabonds, and afraid of being slain by every one they meet; so shall these here be.

1. They shall have no comfort or satisfaction in their own minds, but be in continual anguish and terror; for wherever they go, they carry about with them guilty consciences, which makes them a burden to themselves.

(1.) They shall be always solitary, and under prevailing melancholy: they shall not be in the cities or places of concourse, but all along upon the mountains, not caring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced.

(2.) They shall be always sorrowful: Those have reason to be so that are under the tokens of God's displeasure, and God can make those so, that have been most jovial, and have set sorrow at defiance. They that, when time was, thought themselves as the lions of the mountains, so daring were they, now become as the doves of the valleys, so sneaking are they and so dispirited, ready to flee when none pursues, and to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning, not with a godly sorrow, but with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, every one for his iniquity, i. e. for those calamities which they now see their iniquity has brought upon them; not only the iniquity of the land, but their own: they shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to, the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow of one kind or other, and those that will not repent of their iniquity, may justly be left to pine away in it; that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves; to mourn at the last, when the flesh and the body are consumed, and to say, How have I hated instruction! Prov. v. 11.

(3.) They shall be deprived of all their strength of body and mind, ver. 17. All hands shall be feeble, so that they shall not be able to fight or defend themselves, and all knees shall be weak as water, so that they shall not be able to stand nor to stand their ground: they shall feel an universal colliquation, their knees shall flow as water, so that they must fall of course. Note, It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength, for God can soon weaken it.

(4.) They shall be deprived of all their hopes, and shall abandon themselves to despair, ver. 18. they shall have nothing to hold up their spirits with, their aspects shall shew what are their prospects, all dreadful, for they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, as having no expectation ever to wear better cloathing: horror shall cover them, and shame, and baldness, all the expressions of a desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. Note, Those who will not be kept from sin by fear and shame, shall by fear and shame be punished for it; such is the confusion that sin will end in.

2. They shall have no benefit by their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, ver. 19. They that were reduced to this distress were such as had had abundance of silver and gold, money and plate and jewels, and other valuable goods; for which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble: they thought it would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, and that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that money would answer all things: but see how it proved; (1.) It had been a great temptation to them in the day of their prosperity; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it; by their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin: and thus it was the stumbling-block of their iniquity, it occasioned their falling into sin, and obstructed their return to God. Note, There are many whose wealth is their snare and ruin; the gaining of the world is the losing of their souls, it makes them proud, secure, covetous, oppressive, voluptuous, and that which, if well used, might have been the servant of their piety, being abused becomes the stumbling-block of their iniquity. (2.) It was no relief to them now in the day of their adversity; for, 1. Their gold and silver could not protect them from the judgments of God, they shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord, they shall not serve to atone his justice or turn away his wrath, nor to screen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. they neither set them so high as that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them so strong as that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that men's wealth is utterly unable to deliver them, or do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his full barns when his soul was required of him; or that other rich man for his purple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue? Money is no defence against the arrests of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the damned. 2. Their gold and silver could not give them any content under their calamities. (1.) They could not fill their bowels; when there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy their hunger, nor serve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold, than fields of corn; the products of the earth which may easily be gathered from the surface of it, are much greater blessings to mankind than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give us daily bread we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though silver and gold we have none. (2.) Much less could they satisfy their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world has not that in it which will answer the desires of the soul, or be any satisfaction to it in a day of distress. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver much less he that loveth it. 3. Their gold and silver shall be thrown into the streets, either by the hands of the enemy, who shall have more spoil than they care for or can carry away; silver shall be nothing accounted of, they shall cast that in the streets; but the gold, which is more valuable, shall be removed and brought to Babylon; or they themselves shall throw away their silver and gold, either because it would be an incumbrance to them and retard their flight, or because it would expose them, and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money; or in indignation at it, because they found that after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape it together and hoard it up, they found it would stand them

in no stead, but do them a mischief rather. Note, The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, 1 John ii. 17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when those fare best that have least.

3. God's temple shall stand them in no stead, ver. 20, 21, 22. This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from, Jer. vii. 4. Micah iii. 11. but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe, (1.) The great honour God had done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them, ver. 20. As for the beauty of his ornament, that holy and beautiful house where they and their fathers praised God, Isa. lxiv. 11. which was therefore beautiful, because holy. It was called the beauty of holiness, and that is the beauty of its ornament; it was also adorned with gold and gifts; as for this, he set majesty, every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Israel the more illustrious among their neighbours. He built his sanctuary like high palaces, Psalm lxxviii. 69. it was a glorious high throne from the beginning, Jer. xvii. 12. But, (2.) Here is the great dishonour they had done to God in profaning his sanctuary; they made the images of their counterfeit deities, which they set up in rivalry with God, and which are here called their abominations and their detestable things, for so they were to God, and so they should have been to them, and these they set up in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And therefore, (3.) It is here threatened that they shall be deprived of the temple; and it shall be no succour to them, therefore have I set it far from them, i. e. sent them far from it, so that it is out of the reach of their services, and they out of the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances and the privileges of a profession of religion will justly be taken away from those that despise and profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at a distance from the temple, but the temple itself shall be involved in the common desolation, ver. 21. the Chaldeans that are strangers, and therefore have no veneration for it, that are the wicked of the earth, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall have it for a prey and for a spoil, all the ornaments and treasures of it shall fall into their hands; who will make no difference between that and other plunder. This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who complained of nothing so much as of that which the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary, Psalm lxxiv. 3. but it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion, who by profaning the temple with strange gods provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by strange nations, and to turn his face from them that did it, as if he had not seen them and their crimes; and from them that deprecated it, as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as they will, let them enter into the secret place, into the holy of holies, as robbers, let them strip it, let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and then farewell all its glory. Note, Those are unworthy to be honoured with the form of godliness, that will not be governed by the power of godliness.

23. ¶ Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. 24. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled. 25. Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. 26. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet: but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients: 27. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Here is, 1. The prisoner arraigned; Make a chain, in which to drag the criminal to the bar and set him before the tribunal of divine justice; let him stand in fetters, (as a notorious malefactor) stand pinioned to receive his doom. Note, Those that break the bands of God's law asunder and cast away these cords from them, will find themselves bound and held by the chains of his judgments, which they cannot break or cast from them. The chain signified the siege of Jerusalem, or the slavery of those that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God, reserved in chains.

2. The indictment drawn up against the prisoner: The land is full of bloody crimes, full of the judgments of blood, so the word is, i. e. of the guilt of blood which they had shed under the colour of justice and by forms of law, with the solemnity of a judgment. The innocent blood which Manasseh shed, it is probable thus shed, by the judgment of the blood was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Or, it is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, the judgment of blood; idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, sodomy, and the like, were bloody crimes, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore when they were become national, there was no remedy but the nation must be cut off. Note, Bloody crimes will be punished with bloody judgments. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now full of violence; the rulers of that city having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any others. This was sadly to be lamented, How is the faithful city become a harlot!

3. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will reckon with them, not only for the profaning of his sanctuary, but for the perverting of justice between man and man: for as holiness becomes his house, so the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and is the avenger of unrighteousness. Now the judgment given is,

1. That since they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they, God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind, and the greatest antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen some are worse than other, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the fire when the work is done.

2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly got, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppression of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed by strangers, and make the pomp of the strong to cease, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might any time prevail against right, as they had done.

3. That since they had defiled the holy place with their idolatries, God would

would defile them with his judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of their own God. When the holy places are deserted by their God, they will soon be defiled by their enemies.

4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another. *Destruction cometh, utter destruction, ver. 25.* For there shall come mischief upon mischief to ruin you, and rumour upon rumour, to frighten you; like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another. Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it, for God will overcome when he judgeth.

5. Since they had disappointed God's expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him. For, (1.) They shall not have the deliverance out of their troubles that they expect; they shall seek peace, i. e. they shall desire it, and pray for it, they shall endeavour it and expect it, but there shall be none; their attempts both to court their enemies and to conquer them shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse. (2.) They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect, ver. 26, they shall seek a vision of the prophet; shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them; they did not desire a vision to reprove them for sin, or to warn them of danger, but to propose them deliverance; such messengers they long to hear; but the law shall perish from the priest, he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to say to them: They would not hear what God had to say to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. *Counsel shall perish from the ancients*; the elders of the people that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture shall be infatuated and at their wit's end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them.

6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load, ver. 27. The king that should inspire life into them, and the prince that should lead them on to attack the enemy, they shall mourn, and be clothed with desolation, their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage, and then no wonder if the hands of the people of the land that should fight for them be troubled, none of the men of might shall find their hands. What can men contrive or do for themselves, when God is departed from them, and appears against them? All must needs be in tears, all in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts, and to make them know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the God to whom vengeance belongs.

C H A P. VIII.

God having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people's miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people's wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring those miseries upon them: that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly reprove the sins of the people, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin. Here God in vision brings him to Jerusalem, to shew him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them, ver. 1—4. and there he sees, (1.) The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar, ver. 5, 6. (2.) The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber, ver. 7—12. (3.) The women weeping for Tammuz, ver. 13, 14. (4.) The men worshipping the sun, ver. 15, 16. And then appeals to him whether such approving people should have any pity shewed them, ver. 17, 18.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the LORD God fell there upon me. 2. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins even downward; fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness; as the colour of amber. 3. And he put forth the form of an end, and took me by a lock of mine head, and the spirit lift me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. 5. ¶ Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way towards the north, so I lift up mine eyes the way towards the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar, this image of jealousy in the entry. 6. He saith furthermore unto me, Son of man seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon, but the messengers of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters concerning Jerusalem, for in the peace or trouble thereof the captives looked upon themselves to have peace or trouble; and therefore he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the 10th chapter.

1. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month, chap. i. 1. This was just 14 months after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left side, to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side, to bear the iniquity of Judah, for now he was sitting in the house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because he will shortly call us to account about them.

2. The opportunity is taken notice of, as well as the time.

(1.) The prophet was himself sitting in his house, in a sedate composed frame; deep perhaps in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the word and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: they that sit down to consider what they have learned

Vol. II. No. CXXXII.

shall be taught more. Or, he sat in his house ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know. (2.) The elders of Judah, that were now in captivity with him sat before him. It is probable it was on the sabbath-day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath-day, both to hear the word from him, and to join with him in prayer and praise; and how could they spend the sabbath better, now they had neither temple nor synagogue, priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, as the good people in Elisha's time, 2 Kings iv. 23. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him, to enquire of the Lord, and sat down at his feet to hear his word. Observe here, 1. When the law was perished from the priest, at Jerusalem, whose lips should keep knowledge, chap. vii. 26. they in Babylon had a prophet to consult. God is not tied to places or persons. 2. Now the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the cords of affliction, then he opens their ears to discipline, Job xxxvi. 8—10. Psalm cxli. 6. Those that despised vision in the valley of vision, prized it now the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. 3. When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God owned him there; and no man forbade him.

3. The divine influence and impression that the prophet was now under, the hand of the Lord fell there upon me. God's hand took hold of him and arrested him, as it were, to employ him, in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

4. The vision that the prophet saw, ver. 2. he beheld a likeness of a man, we may suppose; for that was the likeness he saw before, but it was all brightness above the girdle, and all fire below; fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the apparition he saw, chap. i. 27. and it is likely it was the same person, the man Christ Jesus. It is likely the elders that sat with him (as the men that journeyed with Paul saw a light, and were afraid) and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private meeting, but they had no distinct view of him that spake to him, Acts xxii. 9.

5. The prophet's remove in vision to Jerusalem. The apparition he saw put forth the form of a hand, which took him by the lock of his head, and the Spirit was that hand which was put forth, for the Spirit of God is called the finger of God. Or, The spirit within him lifted him up, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful ready servant of God will be drawn by a hair, by the least intimation of the divine will to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, Psalm xxvii. 8. He was miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he were to fly away upon eagles' wings. This is probable (so Grotius thinks) the elders that sat with him saw; they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair and lifting him up, and then perhaps laying him down again in a trance or ecstasy, while he had the following visions, whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose he could not tell, no more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. Note, Those are best prepared for communion with and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

But being lifted up towards heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven must take that in their way. The spirit represented to his mind the city and temple as plainly as it he had been there in person. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jerusalem, the holy city above, and see the things that are invisible!

6. The discoveries that were made to him there:

1. There he saw the glory of God, ver. 4. Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, the same appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne that he had seen, chap. 1. Note, God's servants, wherever they are, and whithersoever they go, ought to carry about with them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to set that always before them; and those that have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary should desire to see it again, so as they have seen it, Psalm lxi. 2. Ezekiel has this repeated vision of the glory of God, both to give credit to, and to put honour upon the following discoveries. But it seems to have a further intention here: it was to aggravate this sin of Israel, in changing their own God, the God of Israel, who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be, for dungbush gods, scandalous gods, false gods, and indeed no gods. Note, The more glorious we see God to be, the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord shall remove from them, chap. xi. 23. and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the approach of Israel, and that was the image of jealousy, set northward, at the gate of the altar, ver. 3—5. What image this was is uncertain; probably an image of Baal, or of the grove, which Manasseh made and set in the temple, 2 Kings xxi. 7. 2 Chron xxxiii. 3. which Josiah removed, but his successors it seems replaced there, as probably they did the chariots of the sun, which he found at the entering in at the house of the Lord, 2 Kings xxiii. 11. and this is here said to be in the entry. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us, it was the image of jealousy, to convince our consciences, that whatever image it was, it was in the highest degree offensive to God, and provoked him to jealousy; he resented it as a husband would resent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, Neh. i. 2. The very setting up of his image in the house of the Lord was enough to provoke him to jealousy; for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. They that placed this image at the door of the inner gate, where the people assembled, called the gate of the altar, ver. 5. thereby plainly intended, (1.) To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adoration of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his justice. (2.) To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image; like the adulteress Solomon describes, that sits at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple let him turn in hither, Prov. ix. 14. With good reason therefore is this called the image of jealousy.

We may well imagine what a surprise, and what a grief it was to Ezekiel to see this image in the house of God, when he was in hopes that the judgments they were under had, by this time, wrought some reformation among them; but there is more wickedness in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now, 1. God appeals to him whether this

was not bad enough, and a sufficient ground for God to go upon in casting off this people, and abandoning them to ruin. Could he, or any one else, expect any other but that God should go far from his sanctuary, when there were such abominations committed there, in that very place; nay, was he not perfectly driven thence, they did these things designedly, and on purpose that he should leave his sanctuary, and so shall their doors be; they have thereby, in effect, like the Gadarens, desired him to depart out of their coasts, and therefore he will depart, he will no more dignify and protect his sanctuary, as he had done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But, 2. Though this is bad enough, and serves abundantly to justify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worse. But turn thee yet again, and thou wilt be amazed to see greater abominations than these. Where there is one abomination it will be found there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

7. ¶ And he brought me to the door of the court, and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. 8. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. 9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and saw: and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. 11. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the LORD seeth us not; The LORD hath forsaken the earth.

We have here a further discovery of the abominations that were committed at Jerusalem, and within the confines of the temple too. Now observe.

1. How this discovery is made. God in vision brought him to the door of the court, the outer court, along the sides of which the priests' lodgings were. God could have introduced him at first into the chambers of imagery, but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own industry, in searching out these mysteries of iniquity, and partly to make him sensible with what care and caution those idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the priests' apartments they had run up a wall, to make them the more private, that they might not lie open to the observation of those who passed by; a shrewd sign they did something that they had reason to be ashamed of. He that doth evil hates the light. They were not willing that those who saw them in God's house, should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves, and undo in private what they did in public. But, behold, a hole in the wall, ver. 7. a spy-hole, by which you might see that which would give cause to suspect them. When hypocrites, screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world, and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art but that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them to those who look diligently, not to be what they pretend to be. The asses ears in the fable appeared from under the lion's skin. This hole in the wall Ezekiel made wider, and behold a door, ver. 8. This door he goes in by into the treasury, or some of the apartments of the priests, and sees the wicked abominations that they do there, ver. 9. Note, Those that would discover the mystery of iniquity in others, or in themselves, must accomplish a diligent search; for Satan hath his wiles and depths, and devices which we should not be ignorant of, and the heart is deceitful above all things; in the examining of it, therefore we are concerned to be very strict.

2. What the discovery is; it is a very melancholy one.

(1.) He sees a chamber set round with idolatrous pictures, ver. 10. All the idols of the house of Israel, which they had borrowed from the neighbour nations, were portrayed upon the wall round about, even the vilest of them, the forms of creeping things, which they worshipped, and beasts, even abominable ones, that are poisonous and venomous; at least, they were abominable when they were worshipped. This was a sort of pantheon, a collection of all the idols together, which they paid their devotions to. Though the second commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad and as dangerous.

(2.) He sees this chamber filled with idolatrous worshippers, ver. 11. There were seventy men of the elders of Israel offering incense to these painted idols. Here was a great number of idolaters strengthening one another's hands in this wickedness, though it was in a private chamber, and the meeting industriously concealed, yet here were seventy men engaged in it; I doubt these elders were many more than those in Babylon that sat before the prophet in his house, ver. 1. They were seventy men, the number of the great Sanhedrim, or chief counsel of the nation, and we have reason to fear, the same men; for they were the ancients of the house of Israel, not only in age, but in office, who were bound, by the duty of their place, to restrain and punish idolatry, and to destroy and abolish all superstitious images wherever they found them; yet these were they that did themselves worship them in private, so undermining that religion, which in public they professed to own and promote, only because by it they held their preferments. They had every man his censer in his hand; so fond were they of the idolatrous service, that they all would be their own priest! and very prodigal they were of their perfumes in honour of these images, for a thick cloud of incense went up, that filled the room. O that the zeal of these idolaters might shame the worshippers of the true God out of their indifference to his service! The prophet took particular notice of one that he knew, who stood in the midst of these idolaters, as chief among them, being perhaps president of the great council at this time, or most forward in this wickedness. No wonder the people were corrupt, when the elders were so: The sins of leaders are leading sins.

(3.) What the remark is that is made upon it, ver. 12. Son of man, hast thou seen this? Couldst thou have imagined that there wast such wickedness committed? It is here observed concerning it, 1. That it was done in the dark; for sinful works are works of darkness: They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare; the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. 2. That this one idolatrous chapel was but a specimen of many the like; here they met together, to wor-

ship their images in concert, but, it should seem, they had every man the chamber of his imagery besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best: Idolaters had their household gods, and their family worth p of them in private, which is a shame to those who call themselves Christians, and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they chambers of imagery, and shall not we have chambers of devotion? 3. That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry: They worship images in the dark, the images of the gods of other nations; and they say, Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom we should serve, seeth us not: Jehovah hath forsaken the earth, and we may worship what God we will, he regards us not. (1.) They think themselves out of God's sight; they say, The Lord seeth us not: They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely, that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to be idolaters, that therefore it was hid from the eye of God; as if there were any darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him; but the church argues right, as to this very sin of idolatry, Psalm xlv. 20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? No doubt he shall. (2.) They think themselves out of God's care; the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and looks not after the affairs of it, and then we had as good worship any other god as him. Or, he hath forsaken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies, and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of it; our one God cannot or will not deliver us, and therefore let us have many. This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsaken them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, Those are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived to such a pitch of impudence, as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

13. ¶ He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. 14. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was towards the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15. ¶ Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. 17. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Here we have,

1. More and greater abominations discovered to the prophet: He thought what he had seen was bad enough, and yet, ver. 13. Turn thee again, and thou shalt see yet greater abominations, and greater still, ver. 15. as before, ver. 6. There are those who live in retirement, that do not think what wickedness there is in this world; and the more we converse with it, and the farther we go abroad into it, the more corrupt we see it. When we have seen that which is bad, we may have our wonder at it made to cease by the discovery of that which, upon some account or other, is a great deal worse. We shall find it so in examining our own hearts, and searching into them, there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance and variety of abominations; and when we have found out much amiss, still we shall find more; for the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it perfectly?

Now the abominations here discovered were,

(1.) Women weeping for Tammuz, ver. 14. an abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears, than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart! yet such absurdities as these are they guilty of who follow after lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks; others for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears. The image they say was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammuz, and anon rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God and the sacred rites of his worship; and some think, with their idolatry, prostrating themselves also to corporeal whoredom; for these two commonly went together; and they that dishonoured the divine nature by the one, were justly given up to vile affections and a reprobate sense, to dishonour the human nature, which no where ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

(2.) Men worshipping the sun, ver. 16. And this was so much the greater an abomination that it was practised in the inner court of the Lord's house, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar; there, where the most sacred rites of their holy religion used to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed; justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only; some think they were the king and his princes; it should rather seem that they were priests, for this was the court of the priests, and the proper place to find them in: They that were intrusted with the true religion, had it committed to their care, and were charged with the custody of it, they were the men that betrayed it. 1. They turned their back towards the temple of the Lord, resolvedly forgetting it, and designedly slighting it, and putting contempt upon it. Note, When men turn their backs upon God's institutions and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions: Impiety is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity. 2. They turned their faces towards the east, and worshipped the sun, the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry, it is mentioned in Job's time, Job xxxi. 26. and had been generally practised among the nations, some worshipping

worshipping the sun under one name, others under another; these priests finding it had antiquity and general consent and usage on its side (the two pleas which the priests use at this day, in defence of their superstitious rites, and particularly this of worshipping towards the east) practised in the court of the temple, thinking it an omission that it was not inserted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters in worshipping that as a god, and calling it Baal, a lord, which God made to be a servant to the universe! for so the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signifies, *Deut. iv. 19.* and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the Father of lights!

2. The inference drawn from these discoveries, *ver. 17.* *Haft thou seen this, O son of man?* and couldst thou have thought even to see such things done in the temple of the Lord? Now, 1. He appeals to the prophet himself concerning the heinousness of the crime: Can he think it is a light thing to the house of Judah, who know and profess better things, and are dignified with so many privileges above other nations? It is an excusable thing in them, that have God's oracles and ordinances, that they commit the abominations which they commit here. Do not they deserve to suffer that thus sin? Should not such abominations as these make desolate? *Dan. ix. 27.* 2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppression that were to be found in all parts of the nation: *They have filled the land with violence.* It is not strange, if they that wrong God thus, make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trample likewise upon all that is just: And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their own God an abomination, *Ish. i. 11.* &c. *They filled the land with violence,* and then they return to the temple to provoke me to anger there; for even their sacrifices, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt; they return to provoke me, i. e. they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again; and so, they put the branch to their nose; a proverbial expression, noting perhaps their scoffing at God and having him in derision; they snuffed at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose: Or it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served; we read of garlands used in their idolatrous worships, *Acts xiv. 13.* out of which every zealot took a branch, which they smelled to as a nosegay. *Dr. Lightfoot, Ho. Heb. in Joh. xv. 6.* gives another sense of this place; *They put the branch to their wrath, or to his wrath,* as the Masorites read it, i. e. they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they had already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or putting the branch to the nose may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men. 3. He passeth sentence upon them that they shall be utterly cut off. Therefore, because they are thus furiously bent upon sin, *I will also deal in fury with them, ver. 18.* *They filled the land with their violence,* and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions, either, (1.) Of his own pity; *mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity;* repentance shall be hid from his eyes; or, (2.) Of their prayers; *though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them;* for still their sins cry louder for vengeance, than their prayers cry for mercy: God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, *1 Kings xviii. 26.* Time was when God was read to have heard even before they cried, and to answer while they were yet speaking; but now they shall seek me early and not find me, *Prov. i. 28.* It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart that God will regard.

C H A P. IX.

The prophet had in vision seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure it was not represented to him worse than really it was; now here follows of course a representation of their ruin approaching, for when sin goes before, judgments come next. Here is, 1. Preparation made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. The removal of Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, *ver. 3.* 3. Orders given to one of the persons employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, *ver. 3, 4.* 4. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly, *ver. 5-7.* 5. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth, *ver. 8-10.* 6. The report made by them that were to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter, *ver. 11.* And this shews an usual method of providence in the government of the world.

1. **H**E cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. 2. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. 3. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; 4. And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

In these verses we have,

1. The summons given to Jerusalem's destroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet, *chap. viii. 2.* that had brought him to Jerusalem, and had shewed the wickedness that was done there, *he cried, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, ver. 1.* or as it might better be read, and nearer the original, *They that have charge over the city are drawing near.* He had said, *chap. viii. 18.* *I will deal in fury;* now, saith he to the prophet, thou shalt see who are to be employed as the instruments of my wrath; *appropriaverunt visitationes civitatis;* the visitations or visitors of the city are at hand; they would not know the day of their visitation in mercy, and now they are to be visited in wrath.

Observe, (1.) How the notice of this is given to the prophet; *he cried it in mine ears with a loud voice,* which intimates the vehemency of him that spoke; when men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they speak loud; they that regard not the counsel of God given them in a still small voice, shall be made to hear the threatenings, to hear and tremble: It notes also the prophet's unwillingness to be told this; he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their sin will not admit an excuse, and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay; *he cried it in mine ears with a loud voice,* he made me hear it, and I heard it with a sad heart.

(2.) What this notice is: There are those that have charge over the city to destroy it, not the Chaldean armies, they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the visitors, they are only the servants or tools rather; God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waste, which they had long had a charge to protect and watch over; they are at hand, as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath, for every man hath his destroying weapon in his hand, as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword. Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy, have made the good angels their enemies too. These visitors are called and caused to draw near. Note, God has ministers of wrath always within call, always at command; invisible powers, by whom he accomplisheth his purposes. The prophet is made to see this in vision, that he might with the greater assurance in his preaching denounce these judgments. God told it him with a loud voice, taught it him with a strong hand, *Ish. viii. 11.* that it might make the deeper impression upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears.

2. Their appearance upon these summonses is recorded. Presently six men came, *ver. 2.* one for each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six against Jerusalem, for Jerusalem's doom in the judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians, but here are six: In the revelation we find seven, that were to pour out the vials of God's wrath, *Rev. xv. 6.* They came with every one a slaughter-weapon in his hand, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations, of which the king of Babylon's army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army, of whom six are named as principal, *Jer. xxxix. 3.* may be called the slaughter-weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly furnished for every service.

Observe, (1.) From whence they came; *from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, ver. 2.* either because the Chaldeans came from the north, *Jer. i. 14.* *Out of the north an evil shall break forth;* or because the image of jealousy was let up at the door of the inner gate, that looks towards the north, *chap. viii. 3-5.* At that gate of the temple the destroying angels entered to shew what it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that sin lies, judgment may be expected to come. (2.) Observe where they placed themselves; *they went in and stood beside the brazen altar,* on which sacrifices were wont to be offered and atonement made. When they acted as destroyers they acted as sacrificers, not from any personal revenge or ill will, but with a pure and sincere regard to the glory of God; for to his justice all they slew were offered up as victims. They stood by the altar, as it were to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cause, and avenge the horrid profanation of it. At the altar they went to receive their commission to destroy, to intimate, that the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice.

3. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels, distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected; it should seem he was not one of the six, but among them to see that mercy be mixed with judgment, *ver. 2.* This man was clothed with linen, as the priests were, and he had a writer's inkhorn hanging at his side, as anciently attorneys and lawyers' clerks had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their destroying weapons. Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword; they were angels that bore the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the writer's inkhorn; for it is generally agreed, among the best interpreters, that this man represented Christ as Mediator, saving those that are his from the flaming sword of divine justice. He is our High-priest, clothed with holiness, for this was signified by the fine linen, *Rev. xix. 8.* As prophet, he wears the writer's inkhorn, the book of life is the Lamb's book; the great things of the law and gospel which God has written to us, are of his writing, for it is the Spirit of Christ in the writers of the Scripture, that testifies to us, and the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Note, It is matter of great comfort to all good Christians, that, in the midst of the destroyers and the destruction that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great High-priest, who has an interest in heaven, and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

4. The removal of the appearance of the divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think this was that usual display of the divine glory which was between the cherubims over the mercy-seat, in the most holy place, that took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is supposed it was not in the second temple. Others think, it was that display of the divine glory which the prophet now saw over the cherubim in vision; and this is more probable because this is called the glory of the God of Israel, *chap. viii. 4.* and this is it which he had now his eye upon; this was gone to the threshold of the house, as it were to call to the servants that attended without the door, to send them on their errand, and give them their instructions. And the removal of this, as well as the former, might be significant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their house desolate; and when God goes, all good goes; but he goes from none till they first drive him from them: He went at first no further than the threshold, that he might shew how loth he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them, and his stay with them. Note, God's departures from a people are gradual, but gracious souls are soon aware of the first step he takes towards a remove. Ezekiel presently observed that the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub: And what is a vision of angels if God be gone?

5. The charge given to the man clothed in linen to secure the pious remnant from the general desolation. We do not read that this Saviour was summoned and sent for, as the destroyers were; for he is always ready, appearing in the presence of God for us; and to him, as the most proper person, the care of those that are marked for salvation is committed; *ver. 4.* Now observe,

(1.) The distinguishing character of this remnant that is to be saved: They are such as sigh and cry, sigh in themselves, as men in pain and distress, cry to God in prayer, as men in earnest, because of all the abominations that are committed in Jerusalem; It was not only the idolatries they were guilty of, but all their other enormities that were abominations to God. These pious few had witnessed against those abominations, and had done what they could in their places to suppress them; but finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitless, they sat down and sighed and cried, wept in secret, and complained to God, because of the dishonour done to his name by their wickedness, and the ruin it was bringing upon their

their church and nation. Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the sins of others, and that we have not fellowship with them, but we must mourn for them, and lay them to heart; must grieve for that which we cannot help, as those that hate sin for its own sake, and have a tender concern for the souls of others, as David, *Psalms* cxix. 136, and Lot who *taxed his righteous soul* with the wicked conversation of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jerusalem are to be in a special manner lamented, because they are in a particular manner offensive to God.

(2.) The distinguishing care taken of them. Orders are given to find them all out that are of such a pious public spirit; *Go through the midst of the city* in quest of them, and though they are never so much dispersed and never so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet so that you discover them, *and set a mark upon their foreheads*, 1. To signify that God owns them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul is to God *a mark upon the forehead*, which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which *he knows them that are his*. 2. To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. What need we perplex ourselves about this temporal life, if we know by the mark that we have eternal life? 3. To be a direction to the destroyers whom to pass by, as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that that was an Israelite's house, and the first-born there must not be slain. Note, Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep them safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves, shall be distinguished; that cry for other men's sins, shall not need to cry for their own afflictions, for they shall be either delivered from them or comforted under them; God will set a mark upon his mourners, will hush their sighs, and bottle their tears. The *sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads*, *Rev. vii. 3.* was the same token of the care God had of his own people with this here, only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent.

5. ¶ And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. 7. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain; go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city. 8. ¶ And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah LORD God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? 9. Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness; for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not. 10. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head. 11. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

In these verses we have,

1. A command given to the destroyers to do execution according to their commission, *They stood by the brazen altar*, waiting for orders, and orders are here given them to cut off and destroy all that were either guilty of, or accessory to the abomination of Jerusalem, and that did not *sigh and cry* for them. Note, When God has gathered his wheat into his garner, nothing remains but to burn up the chaff, *Matt. iii. 12.*

(1.) They are ordered to destroy all, 1. Without exception; they must go through the city, and smite; they must slay utterly, slay to destruction, give them their death's wound; they must make no distinction of age or sex, but cut off old and young; neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocence of the babes shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work: But what an evil thing is sin then, which provokes the God of infinite mercy to such severity! 2. Without compassion; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity, *ver. 5.* you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites, that is *doing the work of God deceitfully*, *Jer. xlviii. 10.* None needs to be more merciful than God is, and he had said, *chap. viii. 13.* *A fine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity.* Note, Those that live in sin and hate to be reformed will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

(2.) They are warned not to do the least hurt to them that were marked for salvation; *come not near any man upon whom is the mark*, do not so much as threaten or frighten any of them; it is promised them that there shall no evil come nigh them, and therefore you must keep at a distance from them. The king of Babylon gave particular orders that Jeremiah should be protected, Baruch and Ebed-melech were secured, and it is likely others of Jeremiah's friends for his sake; God had promised that *it should go well with his remnant*, and they *should be well treated*, *Jer. xv. 11.* and we have reason to think none of the mourning praying remnant fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, but God found out some way or other to secure them all; as in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Christians were all secured in a city called Pella, and none of them perished with the unbelieving Jews. Note, None of those shall be lost whom God has marked for life and salvation, for the foundation of God stands sure.

(3.) They are directed to begin at the sanctuary, *ver. 6.* that sanctuary which in the chapter before he had seen the horrid profanation of; they must begin there, because there the wickedness began which provoked God to send these judgments; the debaucheries of the priests were the poisoning of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams were owing: The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all other most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin: Begin there to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and reform: Begin there, that all the world may see and know that the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and hates sin most in

those that are nearest to him. Note, When judgments are abroad they commonly begin at the house of God, 1 *Pet. ii. 17.* *You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you*, *Amos iii. 2.* God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners, but not for any that go on still in their trespasses; neither the sacredness of the place, nor the eminency of their place in it, will be their security.

It should seem the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not boggle at that, but, *ver. 7.* *Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain.* They will not be taken from the altar, as was appointed by the law, *Exod. xxi. 14.* but think to secure themselves by keeping hold of the horns of it, like Joab, and therefore, like him, let them die there, 1 *Kings ii. 30, 31.* There the blood of one of God's prophets had been shed, *Matt. xxiii. 35.* and therefore there let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their idolatries, God will justly suffer the enemies of it to defile it with their violences, *Psalms lxxix. 1.* But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the sanctuary; it was putting evil away from among them.

(4.) They were appointed to go forth into the city, *ver. 6, 7.* Note, Wherever sin has gone before, judgment will follow after: and though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there: The holy city shall be no more a protection to the wicked people than the holy house was to the wicked priests.

2. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, 1. They began at the elders, the ancient men that were before the house, and slew them first, either those seventy ancients that worshipped idols in their chambers, *chap. viii. 12.* or those twenty-five that worshipped the sun between the porch and the altar, who might more properly be said to be before the house. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God: and the sins of those who are in the most eminent and public stations call for the most exemplary punishment. 2. They proceeded to the common people; they went forth and slew in the city; for when the decree is gone forth, there shall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end.

3. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reprieve for some, *ver. 8.* *While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face.* Observe here, 1. How sensible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared when so many round about him were cut off: *Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left, and yet the destruction did not come nigh him; only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked*, *Psalms xci. 7, 8.* He speaks as one that narrowly escaped the destruction, attributing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy, that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 2. Observe, how he improved this mercy; he looked upon it that therefore he was left, that he might stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We must look upon it, that for this reason we are spared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the slaughter made, but his flesh trembled for fear of God, as David's *Psalms* cxix. 129. *he fell on his face, and cried, not in fear for himself, he was one of them that were marked, but in compassion to his fellow-creatures.* They that sigh and cry for the sins of sinners, cannot but sigh and cry for their miseries too; yet the day is coming, when all this concern will be entirely swallowed up, in a full satisfaction of this, that God is glorified; and they that now fall on their faces, and cry, *Ah, Lord God*, will lift up their heads and sing *Hallelujahs*, *Rev. xix. 1, 3.* The prophet humbly expostulates with God, *Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel?* and shall there be none left, but the few that are marked? Shall the Israel of God be destroyed? utterly destroyed? When there are but few left, shall those few be cut off, who might have been the seed of another generation? And will the God of Israel be himself their destroyer? Wilt thou now destroy Israel, who was wont to protect and deliver Israel? Wilt thou so pour out thy fury upon Jerusalem, as by the total destruction of the city, to ruin the whole country too? Surely thou wilt not! Note, Though we acknowledge that God is righteous, yet we have leave to plead with him concerning his judgments, *Jer. xii. 1.*

4. Here is God's denial of the prophet's request for a mitigation of the judgment, and his justification of himself in that denial, *ver. 9, 10.* 1. Nothing could be said in extenuation of this sin. God was as willing to show mercy as the prophet could desire; he always is so; but here the case will not admit it; it is such as that mercy cannot be granted without wrong to justice; and it is not fit that one attribute of God should be glorified at the expence of another. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should destroy? especially that he should destroy Israel! By no means: But the truth is, that crimes are so flagrant, that the reprieve of the sinners would be a connivance at the sin: *The iniquity of the house of Judah and Israel is exceeding great*, there is no suffering them to go on at this rate, *the land is filled with innocent blood*, and when the city-courts are appeared to for the defence of injured innocency, the remedy is as bad as the disease, for the city is full of perverseness, or wresting of judgment; and that which they support themselves with in this iniquity, is the same atheistical profane principle, with which they flattered themselves in their idolatry, *chap. viii. 12.* *The Lord hath forsaken the earth*, and left it to us to do what we will in it; he will not intermeddle in the affairs of it; and whatever wrong we do, he sees not; either knows it not, or will not take cognizance of it. Now how can those expect benefit by the mercy of God, who thus bid defiance to his justice? No, nothing can be afforded by an advocate in excuse of the crimes, while the criminal puts in such a plea as this in his own vindication; and therefore, 2. Nothing can be done to mitigate the sentence, *ver. 10.* Whatever you thinkest of it, as for me, mine eye shall not spare; neither will I have pity; I have borne with them as long as it was fit such impudent sinners should be borne with, and therefore now I will recompence their way on their head. Note, Sinners sink and perish under the weight of their own sins; it is their own way, which they deliberately chose, rather than the way of God, and which they obstinately persisted in, in contempt of the word of God, that is recompensed on them: And great iniquities justify God in great severities; nay he is ready to justify himself, as he doth here to the prophet, for he will be clear when he judgeth.

5. Here is a return made of the writ of protection, which was issued out for the securing of them that mourned in Zion, *ver. 11.* The man clothed with linen reported the matter, gave an account of what he had done in pursuance of his commission: he had found out all that mourned in secret for the sins of the land, and cried out against them by a public testimony, and had marked them all in the forehead; Lord, I have done as thou hast commanded me. We do not find that those who were commissioned to destroy reported what destruction they had made, but he who was appointed to protect reported his matter, for it would be more pleasing both to God and to the prophet, to hear of those that were saved than of those that perished: Or, this report was made now, because the thing was finished, whereas the destroying

destroying work would be a work of time, and when it was brought to an end, then the report should be made. See how faithful Christ is to the trust reposed in him! Is he commanded to secure eternal life to the chosen remnant? He has done as was commanded him: *Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none.*

C H A P. X.

The prophet had observed to us, chap. viii. 5. that when he was in vision at Jerusalem, he saw the same appearance of the glory of God there, that he had seen by the river Chebar; now in this chapter he gives us some account of the appearance there, as far as was requisite for the clearing up of the further indications of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, which God here gave the prophet. 1. The scattering of the coals of fire upon the city, which were taken from between the cherubims, ver. 1-7. 2. The removal of the glory of God from the temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone, ver. 8-22. When God goes out from a people, all judgments break in upon them.

1. THEN I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire-stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. 2. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with the coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight. 3. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. 4. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory. 5. And the sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the almighty God when he speaketh. 6. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. 7. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

To possess us with a holy awe and dread of God, and to fill us with his fear, we may observe in this part of the vision which the prophet had,

(1.) The glorious appearance of his majesty. Something of the invisible world is here made visible; some faint representations of its brightness and beauty; some shadows; but such as are no more to be compared with the truth and substance, than a picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us all to the utmost reverence in our thoughts of God and approaches to him, if we will but admit the impressions this discovery of him will make.

1. He is here in the firmament above the head of the cherubims, ver. 1. He manifests his glory in the upper world, where purity and brightness are both in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament aims to speak the God that dwells there infinite: It is the firmament of his power, and of his prospect too; for from thence he beholds all the children of men. The divine nature infinitely transcends the angelic nature, and God is above the head of his cherubims, in respect not only of his dignity above them, but his dominion over them. Cherubims have great power, and wisdom, and influence, but they are all subject to God and Christ.

2. He is here upon the throne, or that which had the appearance of the likeness of a throne (for God's glory and government infinitely transcend all the brightest ideas our minds can either form or receive concerning them), and it was as it were a sapphire stone, pure and sparkling, such a throne hath God prepared in the heavens, far exceeding the thrones of any earthly potentates.

3. He is here attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple, the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, ver. 3. as the prince's life-guard attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are to worship him. Some observe, that they stood on the right side of the house, that is, the south-side, because on the north-side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves at as great a distance as might be.

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling lustre; in the house and inner court there was a cloud and darkness, which filled them, and yet either the outer court or the same court, after some time, was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory, ver. 3, 4. There was a darting forth of light and brightness; but if any over-curious eye pried into it, it would find itself lost in a cloud. His righteousness is conspicuous as the great mountains, and the brightness of it fills the court, but his judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom; a cloud which we cannot see through: The brightness discovers enough to awe and direct our consciences, but the cloud forbids us to expect the gratifying of our curiosity; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Thus, Hab. iii. 4. He hid beams coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power. Nothing more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is. God covers himself with light, and yet, as to us, makes darkness his pavilion. God took possession of the tabernacle and temple in a cloud, which was always the symbol of his presence: In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we shall see face to face.

5. The cherubims made a dreadful sound with their wings, ver. 5. The vibration of them, as of the strings of musical instruments, made a curious melody; bees, and other winged insects, make a noise with their wings. Probably this intimated their preparing to remove, by stretching forth and lifting up their wings, which made this noise as it were to give warning of it. This noise is said to be as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaks, i. e. as the thunder which is called the voice of the Lord, Psalm xxxix. 3. or as the voice of the Lord when he spake to Israel on mount Sinai, and therefore he then gave the law with abundance of terror, to signify, with what terror he would reckon for the violation of it, which he was now about to

do. This noise of their wings was heard even to the outer court, the court of the people; for the Lord's voice, in his judgments, cries in the city, which those may hear that do not, as Ezekiel, see the visions of them.

(2.) The terrible directions of his wrath. This vision has a further tendency than merely to set forth the divine grandeur, further orders are to be given for the destruction of Jerusalem. The greatest devastations are made by fire and sword; for a general slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in ashes, by scattering coals of fire upon it, which in the vision were fetched from between the cherubims.

1. For the issuing out of orders to do this, the glory of the Lord was lifted up from the cherub (as in the chapter before for the giving of orders there, ver. 3.) and stood upon the threshold of the house, in imitation of the courts of judgment, which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God delivered to them from his holy temple, and therefore from thence they shall be made to hear their doom.

2. The man clothed in linen, who had marked those that were to be preserved, is to be employed in this service, for the same Jesus that is the Protector and Saviour of them which believe, having all judgment committed to him that of condemnation as well as that of absolution, will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that obey not his gospel. He that sits on the throne calls to the man clothed in linen to go in between the wheels, and fill his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. This intimates, 1. That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans, was a consumption determined, and therein they executed God's counsel, they did what he designed before should be done. 2. That the fire of divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is just and holy, for it is fire fetched from between the cherubims. The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been sign to, to avenge which, fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Noah and Abime were killed for offering strange fire. If a city, or town, or house, be burned, whether by design or accident, it we trace in it its original, we find and trace coals that kindled the fire came from between the wheels; the fire is not any evil of that kind in the city, but the Lord has a word to say. Jesus Christ acts by commission from the Father, for from him he receives authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Christ came to find fire on the earth, Luke xii. 49. and in the great day will speak this world into ashes; By fire from his hand, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

3. This man clothed with linen readily attended to this service: though, being clothed with linen, he was very unfit to go among the burning coals, yet being called, he said, Lo, I come; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet saw him go in, ver. 2. He went in, and stood beside the wheels, expecting to be furnished there with the coals he was to scatter; for what Christ was to give, he first received, whether for mercy or judgment. He was directed to take fire, but he stayed till he had it given him, to show how slow he is to execute judgment, and how long-tossing to us-ward.

4. One of the cherubims reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were burning coals of fire, and lamps, that went up and down among the living creatures, chap. i. 13. from whence this fire was taken, ver. 7. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a divine original: It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubims, that wonders are wrought. The cherubim put it into his hand, for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus, and to serve all his purposes.

5. When he had taken the fire he went out, no doubt to scatter it up and down upon the city, as he was directed. And who can abide the day of his coming? Who can stand before him when he goes out in his anger?

8. ¶ And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings. 9. And when I looked, behold, the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl-stone. 10. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. 11. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had. 13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. 14. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. 16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. 17. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them. 18. Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 20. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims. 21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. 22. And

the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

We have here a further account of the vision of God's glory which Ezekiel saw, here intended to introduce that direful omen of the departure of that glory from them, which would open the door for ruin to break in.

1. Ezekiel sees the glory of God shining in the sanctuary, so as he had seen it by the river of Chebar, and gives an account of it, that they who had by their wickedness provoked God to depart from them, might know what they had lost, and might lament after the Lord, groaning out their Ichabod, *Where is the glory?*

Ezekiel here sees the operations of divine providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, represented by the *four wheels*; and the perfections of the holy angels, the inhabitants of the upper world and their ministrations, represented by the *four living creatures*, every one of which had *four faces*; the agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is represented by the close communication that was between the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot is by him that drives it; but the same Spirit being both in the *living creatures* and in the *wheels*, speaks that infinite wisdom which serves its own purposes by the ministration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this vision gives our faith a view of that throne which the Lord has prepared in the heavens, and that kingdom of his which *ruleth over all*. Psalm ciii. 19.

The prophet observes, that this was the same vision with that he saw by the river of Chebar, ver. 15—22. and yet in one thing there seems to be a material difference; that that which was there the face of an ox, and was on the left side, chap. i. 10. is here the face of a cherub, and is the first face, ver. 14. whence some have concluded, that the peculiar face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Israelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf. I rather think that in this latter vision the first face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a priest, by what he had seen in the temple of the Lord, 1 Kings vi. 29. but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew assuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims: though putting on different faces, ver. 20. And this first appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being proper to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, because the face of the cherubim had been most abused by the worship of an ox. As sometimes when God appeared to deliver his people, so now when he appeared to depart from them, *he rode upon a cherub, and did fly*. Now observe here.

1. That this world is subject to turns and changes, and various revolutions; the course of affairs in it is represented by *wheels*, ver. 9. sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and sometimes another, they are still ebbing and flowing like the sea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 Sam. ii. 4, &c. Nay, their appearance is as if there were a *wheel in the midst of a wheel*, ver. 10. which intimates the mutual references of providence to each other, and their dependences on each other; and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions as to us are intricate and perplexed, and seemingly contrary.

2. That there is an admirable harmony and uniformity in the various occurrences of providence, ver. 13. *as for the wheels*, though they moved several ways, yet it was cried to them, *O wheel*; they were all as one, being guided by one Spirit to one end, for God works all according to the counsel of his own will, which is one, for his own glory, which is one. And this makes the disposals of providence truly admirable, and to be looked upon with wonder. As the works of his creation considered separately, were good, but all together, *very good*! so the wheels of providence, considered by themselves, are wonderful; but put them together, and they are very wonderful, *O wheel*!

3. That the motions of providence are steady and regular, and whatever the Lord pleaseth that he doth, and is never put upon new counsels. *The wheels turned not as they went*, ver. 11. and the *living creatures went straight forward*, ver. 22. Whatever difficulties lay in their way they were sure to get over them, and were never obliged to stand still, turn aside or go back. So perfectly known to God are all his works, that he is never put upon new counsels.

4. That God makes more use of the ministration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of. *The four wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub*, ver. 9. What has been imagined by some concerning the spheres above, that very orb has its intelligence to guide it, is here intimated concerning the wheels below, that every wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a satisfaction to us if under the wise God there are wise men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be so or no, it appears by this there are wise angels employed, a *cherub to every wheel*.

5. That all the motions of providence, and all the ministrations of angels, are under the government of the great God: They are all full of eyes; those eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and which the angels have always an eye to, ver. 12. *The living creatures and the wheels concur in their motions and rests*, ver. 17. *for the Spirit of life*, as it may be read, or *the Spirit of the living creatures is in the wheels*. The Spirit of God directs all the creatures, both upper and lower, so as to make them serve the divine purpose. Events are not determined by the *wheel of fortune*, which is blind, but by the *wheels of providence*, which are full of eyes.

2. Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not forsaken the earth, as the idolaters suggested, chap. ix. 9. but sad to see that he was forsaking his sanctuary. *The glory of the Lord stood over the threshold*, ver. 4. But now it departed from off the threshold, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and it *flood over the cherubims*, not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel now saw in vision, ver. 18. It ascended that stately chariot, as the judge when he comes off the bench goes into his coach and is gone. And immediately the *cherubims lifted up their wings*, ver. 19. as they were directed, and they mounted up from the earth, as birds upon the wing; and when they went out the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct, beside them, by which it appeared, that the *spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels*. Thus when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events here below shall concur to further his departure. But observe here; in the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke, and withdrawn the shoulder from it, blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw in his chariot, and to mount upwards with it. God had shewn the prophet how the will of God was disobeyed by men on earth, chap. viii. here he shews him how

readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures; and it is a comfort to us when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, *hearkening to the voice of his word*, Psal. ciii. 20.

Let us now, (1.) Take a view of this chariot in which the *glory of the God of Israel rides triumphantly*. He that is the God of Israel is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he that is their God is above the cherubims, their Redeemer is so, 1 Pet. iii. 22. and has the sole and sovereign disposal of all events, *the living creatures and the wheels agree to serve him*, so that he is *Head over all things to the church*. The Rabbins call this vision that Ezekiel had, *Mercabah*, the *vision of the chariot*; and from thence they call the more abstruse part of divinity which treats concerning God and spirits, *Opus currus*, the *work of the chariot*, as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, *Opus beresheth*, the *work of the creation*. Let us attend the motions of this chariot. The *cherubim and the glory of God above them, stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house*, ready to depart and leave the house, ver. 19. But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loth to go, and see if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay, therefore he leaves their court, and stands at the *east-gate*, which led into the *court of the people*, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and when he is really to depart would return to them, if they were but a repenting praying people.

C H A P. XI.

This chapter concludes the vision which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnishes him with two messages: (1.) A message of wrath against those who continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall, ver. 1—13. (2.) A message of comfort to those who were carried captives into Babylon, and were there in the depth of despondency, thinking they should never rise. And as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them, notwithstanding their present security; so the latter are assured that God has mercy in store for them, notwithstanding their present distress, ver. 14—21. And so the glory of God removes farther, ver. 22, 23. The vision disappears, ver. 24. and Ezekiel gives his hearers an account of it, ver. 25.

1. **M**OREOVER the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east-gate of the LORD's house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: 3. Which say, *It is not near*; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. 4. ¶ Therefore prophecy against them, prophesy, O son of man. 5. And the spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. 6. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. 8. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD. 9. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10. Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 11. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof, but I will judge you in the border of Israel: 12. And ye shall know that I am the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you. 13. ¶ And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

We have here,

1. The great security of the princes of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought in vision to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in council upon the present arduous affairs of the city; *The spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east-gate of the Lord's house, and behold, twenty-five men were there*. See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem these twenty-five men were not the same with those twenty-five whom he saw at the door of the temple *worshipping towards the east*, chap. viii. 16. those seem to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar, but these were princes sitting in the gate of the Lord's house, to try causes, Jer. xxvi. 10. and these here are charged, not with corruptions in worship, but mal-administration in the government; two of them are named, because they were the most leading active men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent; Jaazaniah, not that mentioned, chap. viii. 11. for he was the son of Shaphan, this is the son of Azur. Some tell us that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor or president. Now observe,

1. The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet, ver.

ver. 2. *These are the men that devise mischief; under pretence of concerting measures for the public safety, they harden people in their sins, and take off the fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they give wicked counsel in this city, counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to refuse upon holding the city out to the last extremity.* Note, It is bad with a people when the things that belong to their peace are hid from the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels. And when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it; and in the day of discovery and recompense will be sure to lay it at the right door; and will say, *These are the men that devised it*, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

(2.) The particular charge exhibited against them in proof of this character. They are indicted for words spoken at their council-board, which he that stands in the congregation of the mighty would take cognisance of, ver. 2. they said to this effect, *It is not near, the destruction of our city, that has been so often threatened by the prophets, is not near; not so near as they talk of: they are conscious to themselves of such an enmity to reformation, that they cannot but conclude it will come at last; but they have such an opinion of God's patience (though they have long abused it) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while.* Note, Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing doubtful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as a thing at a distance, so that it loses its force. If it be sure, yet it is not near, whereas in truth, the judge stands before the door.

Now if the destruction is not near, they conclude, *Let us build houses; let us count upon a continuance, for this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh.* This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more but this, we are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, and shall receive no more damage by the besiegers about it, than the caldron doth by the fire under it. Those that think to force us out of our city into captivity, it will be as much at their peril, as it would be to take the flesh out of a boiling pot with their hands. This appears to be the meaning of it, by the answer God gives to it, ver. 9. *I will bring you out of the midst of the city where you think yourselves safe, and then it will appear, ver. 11. that this is not your caldron, neither are you the flesh.* Perhaps it has a particular reference to the flesh of the peace-offerings, which it was so great an offence for the priests themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething, as we find, 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14, and then it intimates, that they were the more secure because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jerusalem repented by a seething pot, Jer. i. 13. now, say they, in a way of jest and ridicule, if it be a seething pot we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us? Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but *be ye not mockers lest your bands be made strong.* Those hearts are hard indeed which are made more secure by these words of God which were designed for warning to them.

2. The method taken to awaken them out of their security. One would think the providences of God, that were concerning them, were enough to startle them; but to help them to understand and improve those, the word of God is sent to them to give them warning, ver. 4. *Therefore prophesy against them, and try to undeceive them, prophesy, O son of Man, upon these dead and dry bones.* Note, The greatest kindness ministers can do to secure sinners is to preach against them, and to shew them their misery and danger though they are never so unwilling to see it. We then act most for them, when we appear most against them. But the prophet being at a loss what to say, to men that were hardened in sin, and bid defiance to the judgments of God, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him, to make him full of power and courage, and said unto him, *Speak.* Note, When sinners are flattering themselves into their own ruin it is time to speak, and to tell them they shall have no peace if they go on. Ministers are sometimes so bashful and timorous, and so much at a loss, that they must be put on to speak, and to speak boldly. But he that commands the prophet to speak, gives him instructions what to say; and he must address himself to them as the house of Israel, ver. 5. not for the princes only, but all the people were concerned to know the truth of their cause, to know the worst of it. They are the house of Israel, and therefore the God of Israel is concerned, in kindness to them, to give them warning; and they are concerned, in duty to him, to take the warning.

And what is it he must say to them in God's name?

1. Let them know, that the God of heaven takes notice of their vain confidences with which they support themselves, ver. 5. *I know the things that come into your minds, every one of them, what secret reasons you have for these resolutions, and what you aim at in putting so good a face upon a matter you know to be bad.* Note, God perfectly knows not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds; not only all we say but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds and as suddenly slip out of them again so that we ourselves are scarce aware of them, yet God knows them; he knows us better than we know ourselves: *He understands our thoughts afar off:* the consideration whereof should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thoughts come into them or lodge with them.

2. Let them know, that all that had fallen or should yet fall in Jerusalem by the sword of the Chaldeans, they that advised to stand it out should be accounted before God the murderers of them; and those slain were the only ones that should remain in the city, as the flesh in the caldron, ver. 6. *you have multiplied your slain in the city, not only those whom you have by the sword of justice unjustly put to death under colour of law, but those whom you have by your wilfulness and pride unwisely exposed to the sword of war, though you were told by the prophets you should certainly go by the worst.* Thus you with your stubborn humour have filled the streets of Jerusalem with the slain. Note, Those who are either unrighteous or impudent in beginning or carrying on a war bring upon themselves a great deal of the guilt of blood; and those who are slain in the battles or sieges which they, by such a reasonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called their slain. Now, these slain are the only flesh that shall be left in this caldron, ver. 7. There shall none remain to keep possession of the city but those that are buried in it. There shall be no inhabitants of Jerusalem but the inhabitants of the graves there, no freemen of the city but the free among the dead.

3. Let them know, that how impregnable soever they thought their city to be, they should be forced out of it, either driven to flight or dragged into captivity: *I will bring you forth out of the midst of it, whether you will or no, ver. 7. and again, ver. 9.* They had provoked God to forsake the city, and thought they should do well enough by their own policy and strength when he was gone; but God will make them know that there is no peace to them that have left their God. If they have by their sins driven God from his house, he will soon by his judgments drive them from theirs: and it will be found that those are least safe that are most

secure. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh, you shall not tarry a way in it as you promise yourselves, and die in your nest; you think yourself safe in the midst thereof, but you shall not be long there.

4. Let them know, that when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their caldron; but saith God, *I will bring a sword upon you, ver. 8. and you shall fall by the sword, ver. 10.* Note, The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him. And there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission, no not in walls of brass. They were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers; but, saith God, *I will deliver you into the hands of strangers:* whose resentments you shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy; see Jer. xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to escape the judgments of God, but God saith he will execute judgments upon them; and whereas they resolved, if they must be judged, it should be in Jerusalem, God tells them, ver. 10. and again, ver. 11. he will judge them in the borders of Israel, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan. Note, Those who have taken never so deep root in the place, where they live, yet cannot be sure that in that place they shall die.

5. Let them know, that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them. *Ye shall know that I am the Lord, ver. 10. and again, ver. 12.* Those shall be made to know by the sword of the Lord, that would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. *I will execute judgments, and then you shall know that I am the Lord,* for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth upon those that have not walked in his statutes. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punisheth the breach of it, *I will execute judgments among you, saith God, because you have not executed my judgments, ver. 12.* Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform, steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us in our ruin and confusion; one way or other God's judgments will be executed; the law will take place either in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will get him honour upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that it is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked, and observe, when they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in his law, they did after the manners of the heathen that were round about them, and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of divine institutions they wander endlessly. Justly therefore was this made the reason why they should keep God's ordinances, that they might not commit the abominable customs of the heathens, Lev. xviii. 30.

3. This awakening word is immediately here followed by an awakening providence, ver. 10. Where we may observe,

1. With what power Ezekiel prophesied, or rather what a divine power went along with it; *It came to pass when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Baniab died; who was mentioned, ver. 1. as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that made all the mischief in Jerusalem.* It should seem, this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men, chap. ix. 6. upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed, ver. 8. as he did here; but it was an assurance, that when this prophecy should be published it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased oftentimes to single out some sinners, and to make them monuments of his justice, for warning to others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe are snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant; as Ananias and Sapphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what pity Ezekiel prayed. Though the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, and really an honour to him, yet he was in a mighty concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend: *He fell on his face, and cried with a loud voice, as one in earnest; Ah, Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?* Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under, and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword die thus by the immediate hand of heaven? Then thou wilt indeed make a full end. Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn so long for Saul; but thus he shewed how far he was from desiring the woeful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea though they are wicked.

14. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 15. Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get ye far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession, 16. Therefore say, Thus saith the LORD God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. 17. Therefore say, Thus saith the LORD God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. 18. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from thence. 19. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: 20. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompence their way upon their own heads, saith the LORD God.

Prophecy was designed that by it every valley might be exalted, as well as every mountain and hill brought low, Isa. xl. 4. and prophets were to speak not

not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the desponding and trembling at God's word. The prophet having in the former part of this chapter, received instructions for the awakening of those that were *at ease in Zion*, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and by the rivers that sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe,

1. How the pious captives were trampled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, *ver. 15.* God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon; God had owned them as *good figs*, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwell in Jerusalem. Observe, (1.) How they are derided; they are thy brethren, saith God to the prophet, whom thou hast a concern and affection for; they are *the men of thy kindred, the men of thy redemption*; so the word is; thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession doth belong, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity: They are *the whole house of Israel*, God so accounts of them, because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit, they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and perhaps upon that account they are called *his brethren, and the men of his kindred.* (2.) How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they said of them, *Get ye far from the Lord.* They that were *at ease* and *proud* themselves scorned their brethren that were *humbled* and under humbling providences. 1. They cut them off from being members of their church; because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they excommunicated them, and said, *Get ye far from the Lord*, we will have nothing to do with you; those that were superstitious were very willing to shake off those that were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. 2. They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part or lot in the matter; *unto us is this land given in possession*, and you have forfeited your estates by surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become intitled to them; God takes notice of and is much displeased with the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

2. The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insolent carriage of their brethren towards them. They had hated them and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, but *he shall appear to their joy*, *Isa. lvi. 5.* God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them, *ver. 16.* it is true, *I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them among the countries*, they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations as that they would be lost among them, but I have mercy in store for them. Note, God takes occasion from the contempts which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them; as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair.

Now God promiseth,

(1.) That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it, *ver. 16.* *I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come.* They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple, 1. *God will be a sanctuary to them*, i. e. a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on the horns of the altar. Or rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity, as it was thought could be had no where but in the temple: They shall there see *God's power and his glory*, so as they used to see it in the sanctuary: They shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as well as over the altar sanctified the gift, so that they shall *please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.* 2. *He will be a little sanctuary*, not seen or obeyed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and an envious eye upon that house at Jerusalem which was *high and great*, 1 Kings ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them; God regards the low estate of his people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of divine grace; the great God will be to his people a little sanctuary. Note, They that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communication of divine grace and comforts.

(2.) That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land, *ver. 17.* *I will gather even you that are thus dispersed, thus despised, and given over for lost by your own countrymen. I will gather you from the people, distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, and assemble you in a body out of the countries where you have been scattered; you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then I will give you the land of Israel, which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from.* Note, It is well for us that men's severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land, whom uncharitable men, by their monopolies of it to themselves, had excluded from it. *I will give you the land of Israel*, give it you again by a new grant, and they shall come thither. If there be any thing in the change of the person from you to them, it may signify the posterity of those to whom the promise is made: You shall have the title as the patriarchs had, and they that come after shall have the possession.

(3.) That God by his grace would part between them and their sins, *ver. 18.* Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry; when they come thither to their own land again, they shall take away all the detestable things thereof. Their idols, that had been their detestable things, should now be looked upon with detestation; not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives; they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain; they shall take all the abominations thereof from thence. Note, Then it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous estate, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state: *What have I to do any more with idols?*

(4.) That God would powerfully dispose them to their duty; they shall not only cease to do evil, but they shall learn to do well; because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace.

1. God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, *ver. 19.* This is a gospel promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven, whom he has prepared heaven for. It is promised, 1. That God will give

them one heart, i. e. a heart entire for the true God, and not divided as it had been among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconstant with itself; One heart is a sincere and upright heart, his intentions of a piece with its professions. 2. That he will put a new spirit with them, a temper of mind agreeable to the new circumstances which God in his providence would bring them into. All that are sanctified have a new spirit, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name or a new face will not serve without a new spirit. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. 3. That he will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy as a stone; no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the stony ground. 4. That he will give them a heart of flesh, not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pain and spiritual pleasures; will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions; this is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land, for then such a change of the condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the better country, that is, the heavenly.

2. Their practices shall be consonant to those principles; *I will give them a new spirit*, not that they may be able to discourse well of religion and to dispute for it, but that they may walk in my statutes in their whole conversation, and keep mine ordinances in all acts of religious worship, *ver. 20.* These two must go together, and those, to whom God has given a new heart and a new spirit, will make conscience of both; and then they shall be my people, and I will be their God: The ancient covenant which seemed to have been broken and forgotten shall be renewed. By their idolatry it should seem they had cast God off, by their captivity it should seem God had cast them off: but when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again: God, by his good work in them, will make them his people; and then, by the tokens of his good will towards them, he will shew that he is their God.

3. Here is a threatening of wrath against those who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatened, the righteous are distinguished so as not to share in the evil of those judgments; so, when favours are promised, the wicked are distinguished so as not to share in the comfort of those favours; they have no part or lot in the matter, *ver. 21.* But as for them that have no grace, what have they to do with peace? Observe, 1. Their description; their heart walks after the heart of their detestable things; they have as great a mind to worship devils, as devils have to be worshipped: Or, in opposition to the new heart which God gives his people, which is a heart after his own heart, they have a heart after the heart of their idols, i. e. in their temper and practice they conformed themselves to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the idols as they have of them, and of them they learned lowliness and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedness, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as those are the man is. 2. Their doom; it carries both justice and terror in it; *I will recompense their way upon their own heads*, i. e. I will deal with them as they deserve. There needs no more than this to speak God righteous, that he doth but render to men according to their deserts: And yet such are the deserts of sin, that there needs no more than this to speak the sinner miserable.

22. ¶ Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 23. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. 24. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldaea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shewed me.

Here is, 1. The departure of God's presence from the city and temple. When the message was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprized of it, fully instructed how to separate between the precious and the vile, then the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them, *ver. 22.* as before, *chap. x. 19.* Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they lose no time. We left the glory of the Lord last at the east-gate of the temple, *chap. x. 19.* which is here said to be in the midst of the city: Now here we are told, that finding and wondering that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to the mountain, which is on the east side of the city, *ver. 23.* that was the mount of Olives. On the mountain they had set up their idols, to confront God in his temple, when he dwelt there. 1 Kings xi. 7. and thence it was called the mount of corruption, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. therefore their God doth as it were set up his standard, his tribunal, as it were to confront them, who thought to keep possession of the temple for themselves now God had left it. From that mountain there was a full prospect of the city, thither God removed, to make good what he had said, *Deut. xxxii. 20.* *I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be.* It was from this mountain that Christ beheld the city, and wept over it, in the foresight of its last destruction by the Romans. The glory of the Lord removed thither, to be as it were yet within call and ready to return, if now at length, in this their day, they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace. Loth to depart bids often farewell; God, by going away thus slowly, thus gradually, intimated, that he left them with reluctance, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now, in effect, say, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* But though he bear long, he will not bear always, but will at length forsake those, and cast them off for ever, who have forsaken him, and cast him off.

2. The departure of this vision from the prophet; at length it went up from him, *ver. 24.* he saw it mount upwards, till it went out of sight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly vision, that it descended from above, for thitherwards it returned. Note, The visions which the saints have of the glory of God, will not be constant till they come to heaven. They have glimpses of that glory, which they soon lose again; visions which go up from them; tastes of divine pleasures, but not a continual

continual feast. It was from the mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain, when those that had seen him manifested in the flesh, saw him no more. It was foretold, *Zech. xiv. 4.* that his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, stand last there.

3. The prophet's return to them of the captivity; the same spirit that had carried him in a trance or ecstasy to Jerusalem, brought him back to Chaldea, for there the bounds of his habitation are at present appointed, and that is the place of his service. The spirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, (which was equivalent) to support and comfort him in his captivity.

4. The account which he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, *ver. 25.* He received that he might give, and he was faithful to him that appointed him: He delivered his message very honestly; he spoke all that, and that only, which God had shewed him: He told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening towards that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that stayed behind and laughed at them for going when they did, nor wish themselves there again, but be content in their captivity. Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin, and so near to ruin? It is better be in Babylon under the favour of God, than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse. But though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may suppose they sent the contents of it to them at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence; and well had it been for Jerusalem, if she had taken the warning hereby given.

C H A P. XII.

Though the vision of God's glory be gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him still, and is by him sent to the people, and to the same purpose with that which was discovered to him in the vision, namely, to set forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jerusalem, by which the city and temple should be entirely laid waste. In this chapter, 1. The prophet, by removing his stuff, and quitting his lodgings, must be a sign to set forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jerusalem in the utmost confusion when the Chaldeans took the city, *ver. 1—16.* 2. The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, must be a sign to set forth the famine in the city during the siege, and the consternation that the inhabitants should be in, *ver. 17—20.* 3. A message is sent from God to the people, to assure them that all these predictions should have their accomplishment very shortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themselves with hopes they would, *ver. 21—28.*

1. **T**HE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. 3. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight, and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight; it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. 4. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. 6. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. 7. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand, I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. 8. ¶ And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What dost thou? 10. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. 11. Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall remove and go into captivity. 12. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. 13. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. 14. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. 15. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. 16. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God, that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again, and, he having seen it once and a second time, he was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that he ever saw it any more; and yet the word of the

Lord comes to him, for God did in divers manners speak to the fathers, *Heb. i. 1.* and they often heard the words of God, when they did not see the visions of the Almighty. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy, which is more sure than vision: We may keep up our communion with God without raptures and extasies.

In these verses the prophet is directed,

1. By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah, king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne, they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was now projecting to shake off; from which, it is probable, these poor captives promise themselves mighty matters, and, it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope, that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange or prisoners; and while they were fed with these vain hopes, they could not let themselves either to submit to their affliction, or to get good by their affliction: It was therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them, that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-sufferer. Now one would have thought, it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he doth afterwards, *ver. 10.* but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he must first give them a sign of it; must speak it to their eyes first, and then to their ears: And here we have,

(1.) The reason why he must take this method, *ver. 2.* it is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed, or will soon forget, or at least will not be at all affected with what they only hear of, it will make no impression at all upon them: *thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house*, whom it is next to impossible to work any good upon; they have eyes and ears, they have intellectual powers and faculties, but they see not, they hear not; they were idolaters, whose character it was, that they were like the idols they worshipped, which have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, *Psalm cxv. 5—8.* Note, Those are to be reckoned rebellious that shut their eyes against the divine light, and stop their ears to the divine law. They that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties and means, and will not use them, their ignorance is so far from being their excuse, that it adds rebellion to their sin. None so blind, so deaf, as those that will not hear, that will not see. They see not, they hear not: for they are a rebellious house. The cause is all from themselves; the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed. Note, Ministers must accommodate themselves, not only to the weakness but to the wilfulness of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly. If they dwell among those that are rebellious, they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcusable.

(2.) The method he must take to awaken and affect them; he must furnish himself with all necessities for removing, *ver. 3.* provide for a journey, clothes and money; he must remove from one place to another, as one unsettled and forced to shift; this he must do by day, in the sight of the people; he must bring out all his household goods, to be packed up and sent away, *ver. 4.* and, because all the doors and gates were either locked up that they could not pass through them, or so guarded by the enemy that they durst not, he must therefore dig through the wall, and convey his goods away clandestinely through that breach in the wall, *ver. 5.* He must carry his goods away himself upon his own shoulders, for want of a servant to attend him; he must do this in the twilight, that he might not be discovered; and, when he has made what shift he can to secure some of the best of his effects, he must himself steal away at even in their sight, with fear and trembling, and must go as they that go forth into captivity, *ver. 6.* that is, he must cover his face, *ver. 6.* as being ashamed to be seen and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern: He must go away as a poor broken tradesman, that, when he is forced to shut up his shop, hides his head or runs his country.

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them; and when perhaps he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God saith, *ver. 3.* *It may be they will consider*, and will by it be taken off from their vain confidences, though they be a rebellious house. Note, We must not despair even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themselves and repent; and therefore must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because while there is life there is hope: And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices (for such was this of Ezekiel's removing) though there be but the *it may be* of success. If but one soul be awakened to consider, our care and pains will be well bestowed.

(3.) Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him, *ver. 7.* *I did so as I was commanded.* Hereby he teaches us all, and ministers especially, 1. To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even the most difficult. Christ himself learnt obedience, and so we must all. 2. To do all we can for the good of the souls of others, to put ourselves to any trouble or pains, for the conviction of those that are unconvinced. *We do all things*, that is, we are willing to do any thing, *dearly beloved, for your edifying.* 3. To be ourselves affected with those things wherewith we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give his hearers a melancholy prospect, he doth himself put on a melancholy aspect. 4. To fit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our stuff for removing, because we have here no continuing city. *Arise, depart, this is not your rest, for it is polluted.* Thou dwellest in a rebellious house, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world as this is?

2. He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, it was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God doth, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

(1.) It was supposed that the people would ask the meaning of this sign, or at least they should, *ver. 9.* *Hath not the house of Israel said unto thee, What dost thou?* Yes, I know they have. Though they are a rebellious house, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God; as those, *Isa. lviii. 2.* who sought God daily. Therefore the prophet must do such an odd uncouth thing, that they might enquire what it meant; and then it may be hoped people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in answer to their enquiries. But some understand it as an intimation that they had not made any such enquiries: *Hath not this rebellious house so much as asked thee, What dost thou?* No, they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask. Note, When God sends to us by his ministers, he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and

what enquiries we make upon them; and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we should apply ourselves to our ministers for further instruction, and then we shall know, if we thus follow on to know.

(2.) The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, *ver. 10.* *This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem; they knew who it was, and gloried in it now they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem, and that the house of Israel was yet intire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough; but tell them, saith God, that in what thou has done they may read the doom of their friends at Jerusalem: Say, I am your sign, ver. 11.* As the conversation of ministers should teach the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unfettlements and removes of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world, no continuance, but constant changes. When times of trouble are coming on, Christ tells his disciples, *they shall first lay their hands on you, Luke xxi. 12.*

1. The people shall be led away into captivity, *ver. 11.* *As I have done, so shall it be done unto them, they shall be forced away from their own houses, no more to return to them; neither shall their place know them any more.* We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place, that it is our resting-place; for how far we may be torn from it before we die we cannot foresee.

2. The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape, for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face, *Jer. xxiv. 3.* *Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken.* Ezekiel here foretells it to those who made him their confidence, and promised themselves relief from him. (1.) That he shall himself carry away his own goods. *He shall bear upon his shoulder some of his most valuable effects.* Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter: he that was wont to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, shall now himself carry his goods on his back, and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, *they shall dig through the wall, to carry out thereby.* Men shall be their own house-breakers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property. (2.) That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise, with a mask or vizard on, which shall cover his face, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall not see the ground with his eyes. He that, when he was in pomp, affected to be seen, now he is in his flight is afraid to be seen; let none therefore either be proud of being looked at, or overmuch pleased with looking about them; when they see a king with his face covered that he cannot see the ground. (3.) That he shall be made a prisoner, and carried captive into Babylon, *ver. 13.* *My net will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare.* It seemed to be the Chaldeans net, and their snare, but God owns it for his. Those that think to outrun the sword of the Lord, will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said that king Zedekiah should see the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon; Ezekiel saith he shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. Those that were disposed to cavil, would perhaps object that these two prophets contradicted one another; for one said he should see the king of Babylon, the other said he should not see Babylon, and yet both proved true; he did see the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see Babylon when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble, but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles: Little joy could they have in seeing him, when he could not see them. (4.) That all his guards should be dispersed, and utterly disabled to do him any service, *ver. 14.* *I will scatter all that are about him to help him, so that he shall be left helpless; I will scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries, ver. 15.* to be monuments of divine justice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? He that flies one time, may fight another time: No, *I will draw out the sword after them, which shall cut them off wherever it finds them; for the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed; yet of Zedekiah's scattered troops some shall escape, ver. 16.* *I will leave a few men of them; though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off, some shall have their lives given them for a prey; and it is very observable, for what end they are thus remarkably spared, that they may declare all their abomination among the heathen whither they come; the troubles they are brought into will bring them to themselves, and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the justice of God in all that is brought upon them, and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins which provoked God thus to contend with them; and as by this it shall appear that they were spared in mercy, so hereby they will make a suitable grateful return to God for his favours to them in sparing them.* Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were surrounded, we must look upon it, that for this end among others we were spared, that we might glorify God, and edify others, by making a penitent acknowledgment of our sins: And those that by their afflictions are brought to this, are then made to know that God is the Lord, and may help to bring others to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil! The dispersion of sinners, that had done God much dishonour and disservice in their own country, proves the dispersion of penitents that shall do him much honour and service in other countries. The Levites are by a curse divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, yet it is turned into a blessing, for thereby they have the fairest opportunity to teach Jacob God's laws.

17. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 18. Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness; 19. And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. 20. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Here again the prophet is made a sign to them of the desolations that were coming on Judah and Jerusalem.

1. He must himself eat and drink in care and fear, especially when he was in company, *ver. 17, 18.* Though he was under no apprehension of danger to himself, but lived in safety and plenty, yet he must eat his bread with quaking, the bread of sorrows, *Psal. cxxviii. 2.* and drink his water

with trembling, and with carefulness, that he might express the calamitous condition of those that should be in Jerusalem during the siege: Not that he must dissemble, and pretend to be in fear and care when really he was not; but, being to foretell his judgment, to shew that he firmly believed it himself, and yet was far from desiring it, in the prospect of it he was himself affected with grief and fear. Note, When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon impenitent sinners, they must endeavour to speak feelingly, as those that know the terrors of the Lord: And they must be content to endure hardness, so they may but do good.

2. He must tell them that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, *ver. 19, 20.* Both those that have their home in Jerusalem, and those of the land of Israel, that come to shelter themselves there, *they shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment,* either because they are afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want shortly, or because they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, *their life hanging in doubt before them, Deut. xxviii. 66.* so that what they have they shall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to im-bitter all our comforts, and are themselves very sore judgments. They shall be reduced to these straits, that thus by degrees and by the hand of those that do thus straiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no less than an utter destruction of both that is aimed at in these judgments; *that her land may be desolate from all the fulness thereof, may be stripped of all its ornament, and robbed of all its fruits; and then of course the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, for they are served by the field.* This universal desolation was coming upon them, and then no wonder that they eat their bread with care and fear. Now we are here told, 1. How bad the cause of this judgment was, it is *because of the violence of them that dwell therein; their injustice and oppression, and the mischief they did one another; for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worship.* Note, The decay of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing else; and when neighbours devour one another, it is just with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all. 2. How good the effect of this judgment should be; *ye shall know that I am the Lord; and if, by these judgments, they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these desolations.* Those are happy afflictions, how grievous soever to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance with God.

21. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 22. Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? 23. Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. 24. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25. For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. 26. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 27. Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. 28. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

Various methods had been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up, by repentance and reformation, to prevent them; the prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions, and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power, that one would think they must needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, that though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet they would not come of a long time. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and shewed to be vain and groundless, in two several messages which God sent to them by the prophet at several times, both to the same purpose; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them! *ver. 21—26.* Observe,

1. How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which was become proverbial in the land of Israel, *ver. 22.* They said, *The days are prolonged,* the judgments are not come when they were expected to come, but seem to be still put off *die in diem,* and therefore we may conclude that *every vision fails,* because it should seem that some do; that, because the destruction is not come yet, it will never come; we will never trust prophet again, for we have been worse frightened than hurt. And another saying they had, which if it would not conquer their convictions, yet would cool their affections, and abate their concern, and that was, *That the vision was for a great while to come,* it refers to events at a mighty distance, and he prophesies of things, which though they may be true, yet are very far off, so that we need not to trouble our heads about them, *ver. 27.* we may die in honour and peace before these troubles come: And if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did, *Is it not well, if peace and truth shall be in my days?* But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own ruin; and God is here much displeased at it, for, 1. It was a wretched abuse of the patience of God, who, because for a time he kept silence, was thought to be altogether such a one as themselves, *Psal. l. 21.* That forbearance of God which should have led them to repentance, hardened them in sin. They were willing to think their works were not evil, because sentence against them was not executed speedily; and therefore concluded the vision itself failed, because the days were prolonged. 2. It received countenance from the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes, *ver. 24.* of the vain visions, and flattering divinations, even within the house of Israel, to whom were committed the oracles of God. They that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities, no marvel if they deceived themselves by crediting pretended prophecies to which strong delusions God justly gave them.

them up for their idolatries. 3. These sayings were become proverbial, they were industriously spread among the people, so that they were got into every one's mouth, and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs used to be, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but those of the moderns too. Note, It is a token of universal degeneracy in a nation, when corrupt and wicked sayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan, by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying.

2. How they are assured that they do but deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened, these profane proverbs shall be confronted? *Tell them therefore, The days are at hand,* ver. 23. and again, ver. 28. *There shall none of my words be prolonged any more.* Their putting the evil day far from them, doth but provoke God to bring it the sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sorer, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them when it doth come. He must tell them,

(1.) That God will certainly silence the lying proverbs, and the lying prophecies, with which they buoyed up their vain hopes, and make them ashamed of both. 1. *I will make this proverb to cease;* for when they find the days of vengeance are come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be ashamed to use it as a proverb in Israel. *The days are prolonged, and the vision fails.* Note, Those that will not have their eyes opened, and their mistake rectified by the word of God, shall be undeceived by his judgments, for every mouth that speaks perverse things shall be stopped. 2. *There shall be no more any vain vision,* ver. 24. The false prophets, who told the people they should have peace, and should soon see an end of their troubles, shall be disproved by the event, and then shall be ashamed of their pretensions, and shall hide their heads, and impose silence upon themselves. Note, As truth was elder than error, so it will survive it; it got the start, and it will get the race. The true prophets visions and predictions stand and be in full force, power and virtue, they give law, and receive credit, when the vain visions, and the flattering divinations, are lost and forgotten, and shall be no more in the house of Israel; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

(2.) That God will certainly, and very shortly accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty doth he say it, ver. 25. *I am the Lord! I am Jehovah!* That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, *Exod. vi. 3.* But as he is Jehovah in making good his promise, so he is in making good his threatenings: Let them know then that God, with whom they have to do, is the great Jehovah, and therefore,

1. *He will speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; I am the Lord, I will speak.* God will have his saying, whoever gainsays it. God's oracles are called lively ones, for they still speak, when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been, and shall be, a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration: *In your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word.* Even in the worst ages of the church God left not himself without witness, but raised up men that spoke for him, that spoke from him. *I will say the word,* that word that shall stand.

2. *The word that he speaks shall come to pass,* it shall infallibly be accomplished according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it. *I will say the word, and will perform it,* ver. 25. for his mind is never changed, nor his arm shortened, nor his infinite wisdom ever nonplussed. With men, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God; with him it is *dicere, facere*: In the works of providence, as in that of the creation, *he speaks, and it is done;* for he said, *Let there be light, and there was light: Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament,* Numb. xxiii. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 29. Whereas they had said, *Every vision fails,* ver. 22. God saith, No, There shall be the effect of every vision, ver. 23. it shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified. They that see the visions of the Almighty, do not see vain visions; God confirmeth the word of his servants by performing it.

3. It shall be accomplished very shortly; *The days are at hand,* when you shall see the effect of every vision, ver. 23. It is said, it is sworn, that delay shall be no longer, Rev. x. 6. the year of God's patience is now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence; *It shall be no more prolonged,* ver. 25. he hath borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always: *In your days, O rebellious house,* shall the word that is said be performed, and you shall see the threatened judgments, and share in them. *Behold the judge standeth at the door.* The righteous are taken away from the evil to come, but this rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away; no, they shall live to be hurried away, to be chased out of the world. This is repeated again, ver. 28. *There shall none of my words be prolonged any more,* but judgment shall now hasten on apace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing, the deeper shall the arrow pierce. When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world, yet they put by the force of those great truths, and avoid the impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote; they tell us, *The vision we see is for many days to come,* and we prophesy of the times that are very far off; it will be time enough to think of them, when they come nearer; whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; yet a little while, and the vision shall speak, and not lie, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for though it is future, it is very near; and while impenitent sinners slumber their damnation slumbers not.

C H A P. XIII.

Mention hath been made in the chapter before of the vain visions and flattering divinations, with which the people of Israel suffered themselves to be imposed upon, ver. 24. now this whole chapter is levelled against them. God's faithful prophets are no where so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets; not because they were the most spiteful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God, and did the greatest mischief to his people. The prophet here shews the sin and punishment. 1. Of the false prophets, ver. 1—16. 2. Of the false prophetesses, ver. 17—23. Both agreed to soothe men up in their sins, and under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, their prophecies mere shams, and the expectations of the people illusions; for God will let them know that the deceived and the deceivers are his, are both accountable to him, Job xii. 16.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; 3. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. 5. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. 6. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. 7. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. 9. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

The false prophets, which are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem, Jer. xxiii. 14. *I have seen in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing;* some of them among the captives in Babel, as for to them Jeremiah writes, Jer. xxix. 8. *Let not your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you.* And as God's prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence that they were guided by one and the same good Spirit, so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin, yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they thereby left inexcusable. Ezekiel had express orders to prophesy against the prophets of Israel, so they called themselves; as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable, that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy, till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets; as afterwards they were never deluded by counterfeit messiahs, till after they had refused the true Messiah, and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to hear the word of the Lord: They took upon them to speak what concerned others, as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves, as from him.

And two things the prophet is directed to do;

(1.) To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of that if possible, or thereby to prevent their proceeding any further, by making manifest their folly unto all men, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They are here called *foolish prophets*, ver. 3. men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to; to make fools of the people, they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge.

1. They pretend to have a commission from God, whereas he never sent them: they thrust themselves into the prophetic office, without warrant from him, who is the Lord God of the holy prophets, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are prophets out of their own hearts, so the margin reads it, ver. 2. prophets of their own making, ver. 6. *They say, The Lord saith,* they pretend to be his messengers, but the Lord hath not sent them, has not given them any orders; they counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility, when these pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheists and infidels will thence infer, they are all so. The Lord has not sent them, for, though crafty enough in other things like the foxes, and very wise for the world, yet they are foolish prophets, and have no experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Note, Foolish prophets are not of God's sending, for whom he sends he either finds fit or makes fit. Where he gives warrant he gives wisdom.

2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to them: *They follow their own spirit,* ver. 3. they deliver that as a message from God, which is the product either of their subtle invention, to serve a turn for themselves, or of their own crazed and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy, for they have seen nothing, i. e. they have not really had any heavenly vision; they pretend that what they say, the Lord saith it, but God disowns it, *I have not spoken it,* I never said it, never meant any such thing. What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the ministers of Christ deliver, 1 John i. 1. but either what they had dreamed, or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in; this is called their seeing vanity and lying divination, ver. 6. they pretend to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as divine truth, which they knew to be false. To the same purpose, ver. 7. *Ye have seen a vain vision, and spoke a lying divination,* which had no divine original, and would have no effect, but would certainly be disproved by the event; and, ver. 8. the words are changed, *Ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies;* what they saw, and what they said, was all alike, a mere sham; they saw nothing, they said nothing to the purpose, nothing that could be relied on or deserved regard. Again, ver. 9. *They see vanity, and divine lies;* they pretend to have had visions, as the true prophets had, whereas really they had none, but either it was the creature of their own fancy, they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, that was seeing vanity, or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they saw lies, and divined lies. See Jer. xxiii. 16. &c. Note, Since the devil is universally known to be the father of lies, those put the highest affront imaginable upon God, who tell lies, and then father them upon him. But they had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length to that pitch of impiety as to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like the foxes in the deserts, running to and fro, and seeming to be in a mighty hurry, but it was to get away and shift for their own safety, not to do any good: *The hireling flees and leaves the sheep.* They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves. But, *ver. 5. ye have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the house of Israel.* A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them service; but ye have done nothing to help them. They should have made intercession for them to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven, nor intercourse with heaven, as prophets used to have, *Gen. xx. 7.* and so could do them no service that way. They should have made it their business by preaching and advice to bring people to repentance and reformation; and so have made up the hedge, and put a stop to the judgments of God; but this was none of their care, they contrived how to please people, not how to profit them. They saw a deluge of profaneness and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness and threatening to crush them, and bear them down, and then they should have come in to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, by witnessing against the wickedness of the time and place they lived in, but they thought that would be as dangerous a piece of service as standing in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation, *in the day of the Lord,* when it was proclaimed, *Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?* *Psal. xciv. 16.* Those were unworthy the name of prophets that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened those in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin, *ver. 6. They have made others to hope that all should be well, and they should have peace,* though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word. They were still ready to say, *We will warrant you these troubles will be at an end presently, and we shall be in prosperity again.* As if their warrants would confirm false prophecies, in defiance of God himself.

2. He is directed to denounce the judgments of God against them for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a *Woe* against them, *ver. 3.* and what that woe is we are told, *ver. 8. Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God.* Note, Those are in a woe that have God against them. Woe and a thousand woes to them that have made him their enemy.

2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all, *ver. 9. God's hand shall be upon them,* to seize them and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into his hands. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of heaven, and authorized to preside in the congregation of his church on earth; but by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to, they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, *Matt. v. 19.* Their doom is, (1.) To be expelled out of the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it: *They shall not be in the secret of my people,* their folly shall be so clearly manifested that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship; for they shall be ashamed to shew their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and like Cain shall go out from the presence of the Lord. The people that are deceived by them shall abandon them, and resolve to have no more to do with them. They that usurped Moses's chair shall not be allowed so much as a door-keeper's place. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, *Psal. i. 5.* when God gathers his saints together to him, *Psal. i. 5—16. to be for ever with him.* (2.) To be expunged out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall die childless, shall leave no posterity to take their denomination from them, and so their name shall not be found among those, who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a public register; which was called the writing of the house of Israel, such as we have *Ezra ii.* They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, *Ihu. iv. 3.* Or, they shall not be found written among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of those who prophesied in Christ's name, and yet he will tell them he never knew them, *Matt. vii. 22, 23.* because they were not among those that were given to them. The Chaldean paraphrase reads it, *They shall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the house of Israel.* See *Psal. lxxix. 23.* (3.) To be forever excluded out of the land of Israel, God hath sworn in his wrath concerning them, that they shall never enter with the returning captives in the land of Canaan, which a second time remains a rest for them. Note, Those who oppose the design of God's threatenings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promises, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them.

10. ¶ Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and *there was no peace*; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: 11. Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. 12. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. 14. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 15. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto

you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; 16. To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is no peace*, saith the Lord GOD.

We have here more plain dealing with the false prophets, and some further articles of their doom. We have seen the people made ashamed of the false prophets (though sometimes they had been fond of them) and casting them away, as they should do their false gods, with indignation; now here we find them as much ashamed of their false prophecies, which they had sometimes depended upon with much assurance.

Observe, 1. How the people are deceived by the false prophets. Those flatterers seduce them, saying, *Peace, and there was no peace*, *ver. 10.* They pretended to have seen visions of peace, *ver. 16.* But that could not be, for *there was no peace, saith the Lord God.* There was no prosperity designed for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their security; yet they told them God was at peace with them, and had mercy in reserve for them, and the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans should soon end in an honourable peace, and their land should enjoy a happy repose and tranquillity. They told the idolaters and other sinners, there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in. Thus they seduced God's people, they put a cheat upon them, led them into mistakes, and drew them aside out of that way of repentance and reformation which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Those are the most dangerous seducers who suggest to sinners that which tends to lessen their dread of sin and the fear of God. Now this compared to the building of a slight rotten wall, or, according to our Saviour's similitude, which is to the same purpose with this, *Matt. vii. 26 the building of a house upon the sand,* which seems to be a shelter and protection for a while, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not all displeased with Jerusalem, but that city should be confirmed in its flourishing estate, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it, and was caressed by every body; which invited others to say the same; they made the matter look yet more plausible and promising, they daubed the wall, which the first had built, but it was with untempered mortar, sorry stuff that will not bind or hold the bricks together, they had no ground for what they said nor had it any consistency with itself, but was like ropes of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no care to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds, they only daubed it to hide the cracks, and made it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though never so grateful, that are not built upon a scriptural foundation, nor fastened with a scripture cement, though never so plausible, never so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but ill built.

2. How they will be soon undeceived by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth.

1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an overflowing shower or inundation, such as Solomon calls a *sweeping rain that leaves no good*, *Prov. xxviii. 3.* will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time: *Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall,* the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon ball, battering this wall, and with these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks, *1 Kings xix. 11.* much more an ill-built wall, *ver. 11.* But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind most terrible is, that they arise from the wrath of God, and are enforced by that: that is it that sends them, that is it that gives them the setting-on, *ver. 13.* it is a stormy wind in my fury, and an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly repented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invasion very formidable, but that was nothing in comparison with God's displeasure; the staff in their hand is mine indignation, *Isa. x. 5.* Note, An angry God has winds and storms at command, wherewith to alarm secure sinners; and his wrath makes them frightful and forcible indeed; for *who can stand before him when he is angry?*

2. This storm shall overturn the wall; it shall fall, and the wind shall rend it, *ver. 11. the hailstones shall consume it*, *ver. 13. I will break it down*, *ver. 14. and bring it to the ground,* so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, it shall appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetic reproach of the builders; when the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate, then this credit of the prophets and the hopes of the people will both sink together: the former will be found false in flattering the people, and the latter foolish in suffering themselves to be imposed upon by them, and so exposed to so much the greater confusion, when the judgment shall surprize them in their security. Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves with against the judgments of God, while they continued unreformed, will prove but a refuge of lies, and will not profit them in the day of wrath. See *Isa. xxviii. 17.* Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built, for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which make a great noise but never stir the wall. See *Ihu. xxv. 4.* but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built, in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they entrench themselves shall be as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence, *Psal. lxxvii. 10.* and when their vain predictions are disproved, and their vain expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either, *Hab. iii. 13.* the day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it, *1 Cor. iii. 13.*

3. The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it: *It shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof*, *ver. 14.* And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall and upon them that have daubed it, *ver. 15.* The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false, will punish them for their falsehood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will fall together into the ditch. Note, Those that deceive others will, in the end, prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more dreadful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sin.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus perish together, will justly be ridiculed and triumphed over, *ver. 12. When the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you,* by those that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, Now, where is the daubing wherewith

wherewith ye have daubed the wall? What is gone with all the fine soft words and fair promises wherewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the assurances you gave them, that the troubles of the nation should soon be at an end? The righteous shall laugh at them, the righteous God shall, righteous men shall, saying, Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, Plal. lli. 6, 7. I also will laugh at your calamity, Prov. i. 36. They will say unto you, ver. 15. The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it; your hopes are vanished, and them that supported them, even the prophets of *Ijrael*, ver. 16. Note, Those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them, will shortly be filled with the shame that doth.

17. ¶ Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them. 18. And say, Thus saith the LORD God, Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls. Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? 19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? 20. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. 21. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 22. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: 23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations; for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

As God has promised that when he pours out his Spirit upon his people, both their sons and their daughters shall prophesy, so the devil when he acts as a spirit of lies and falsehood, is not so only in the mouth of false prophets but false prophetesses too; and those are the deceivers whom the prophet is here directed to prophesy against; for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truth as deserve not to be taken notice of; nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin, nor the tenderness and respect that is owing to it exempt them from the reproaches and threatenings of the word of God; no, *Son of man, Set thy face against the daughters of thy people*, ver. 17. God takes no pleasure in owning them for his people, they are *thy people*, as *Exod. xxxii. 7.* and the women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's prophets were, *Go on and prosper*; they prophesy out of their own heart too, they say what comes uppermost, and what they know nothing of, therefore prophesy against them from God's own mouth. The prophet must set his face against them, and try if they can look him in the face and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impudent, it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe,

1. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it.

(1.) They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune. You do mischief by your lying to my people that hear your lies, ver. 19. they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and because you humour them in their sins they are willing to hear you. Note, It is ill with those people that can better hear pleasing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive to tell lies, when they find people willing to hear them; and to excuse themselves with this, *Si populus vult decipi decipiatum*.

(2.) They profaned the name of God by pretending to have received those lies from him, ver. 19. *Ye pollute my name among my people*, and make use of that for the patronizing of your lies, and the gaining of credit to them. Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this they did for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread: they did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not profane and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain. But they did it for poor gain; if they could get no more for it, rather than break, they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, a piece of bread, or a handful of barley, and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, sure they might have had it, and God would have been honoured, but taking it as a fee for a false prophecy God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greatness the offence; for a piece of bread that man will transgress, Prov. xxviii. 21. Had their poverty been their temptation to steal, and so to take the name of the Lord in vain, it had been nothing so bad as when it tempted them to prophecy lies in his name, and so to profane it.

(3.) They perfectly kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions; *Ye hunt the souls of my people*, ver. 18; *hunt them to make them flee*, ver. 20. hunt them into gardens, so the margin reads it. You use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions; or you have got such an influence upon them, that you make them do just as you would have them do, and tyrannize over them. It was indeed the peoples fault that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard: they pretended to save the souls alive that come to them, ver. 18. If they would but be hearers of them and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they beguiled unstable souls that had a concern about salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it them. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected that make such pretensions.

(4.) They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane. *Ye slay the souls that should not die*,

and save those alive that should not live, ver. 19, which is explained, ver. 22. *You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad*; because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them to their great grief and trouble; you put them under invidious characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people, and pretend to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But, on the other side, and which is still worse, you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, and emboldened them to go on in their wicked ways, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to: You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them they shall have peace though they go on, by which their hands have been strengthened, and their hearts hardened. Some think this here refers to the severe censures they put upon those that were gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad; and the commendations they gave to those that rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their hands were strengthened: or by their polluting of the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people who have a value and veneration for the word of God; and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that grieve the spirits and weaken the hands of good people, and that gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God and religion. Nor can any thing strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance though they do not return from their wicked ways.

(5.) They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating their false predictions, as Hananiah did, Jer. xxviii. 10. and they were signs agreeable to their sex: they sewed little pillows to the peoples armholes, to signify that they might be easy and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature, i. e. of persons of every age young and old, distinguished by their stature, ver. 18. These kerchiefs were badges of liberty or triumph; intimating that they should not only be delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them; by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and handkerchiefs on their heads, to raise their fancies and their expectations of something great. Or perhaps the expressions are figurative; they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by laying them easy, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid or embroidered on their heads.

2. How the wrath of God against them is expressed. Here it, a woe to them, ver. 8. and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, ver. 20. But what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no further, for ver. 23. ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations, not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lie they shall be silent for shame. Or their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been; or they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands; when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they see no more vanity nor divine divination, they shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions, the righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked strengthened; the pillows shall be torn from their arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads, the fallacies shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to and fear of those that under colour of a divine authority impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, *Bow down that we may go over*. But it is a sore grief to those who delight in such usurpations to have their power broken and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And when God doth this, he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

C H A P. XIV.

Hearing the word and prayer are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honour to him, and may hope to find favour and acceptance with him; and yet in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one, and some in the other, and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. (1.) The elders of Israel come to hear the word, and enquire of the prophet, but because they are not duly qualified they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, ver. 1—5. and are called upon to repent of their sins and reform their lives, else it is at their peril to enquire of God, ver. 6—11. (2.) Noah, Daniel and Job are supposed to pray for this people, and yet because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judgments, their prayers shall not be answered, ver. 12—21. And yet it is promised in the close that a remnant shall escape, ver. 22, 23.

1. THEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me and sat before me. 2. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? 4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols, 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6. ¶ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Repent and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abomina-

abominations. 7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me: I the LORD will answer him by myself. 8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him: 11. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions: but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

Here is, 1. The address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to enquire of the Lord by him. They came and sat before him, ver. 1. It is probable they were not of those that were now his fellow-captives, and constantly attended his ministry, such are those we read of, chap. viii. 1. but some occasional hearers; some of the grandees of Jerusalem that were come upon business to Babylon, perhaps public business, or an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him, and being desirous to know if he had any message from God which might be some guide to them in their negotiation. By the severe answer given them one would suspect they had an ill design to ensnare the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned themselves just men, complimented the prophet, and sat before him gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

2. The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them: They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were elders of Israel, that was the character they wore, and as such he received them with respect, and it is likely was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives him their real character, ver. 3. they were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel, as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity, and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself, whether they deserved to have any countenance or encouragement given them. Should I be enquired of at all by them? Should I accept their enquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it; for, 1. They have set up their idols in their heart; they not only have idols, but they are in love with them, they doze upon them, are wedded to them, and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections that there is no parting them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from the chambers of their imagery, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshipping them in their fancies and imaginations. They have made their idols to ascend upon their hearts, so the word is, i. e. they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there: Or, when they come to enquire of the prophet, they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only, they still had a secret reserve for them, they kept them up in their hearts; and if they left them for a while, it was *cum animo revertendi*, not a final farewell. Or it may be understood of spiritual idolatry; those whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, whose God is their belly, they set up their idols in their heart: Many that have no idols in their sanctuary, yet have idols in their hearts; which is no less an usurpation of God's throne, and a profanation of his name. Little children, keep yourselves from those idols. 2. They put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Their silver and gold was called the stumbling-block of their iniquity, chap. vii. 19. their idols of silver and gold, by the beauty of which they were allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or their iniquity is their stumbling-block, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tempters; every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust; and so they are their own destroyers; If thou searest, thou alone shalt bear it; and thus they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin whatever comes of it; I have loved strangers, and after them I will go, that is the language of their hearts. And should God be enquired of by such wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him, than do him any honour, as those did that bowed the knee to Christ in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God, who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?

3. The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, ver. 4. Let them know, that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons that God refuseth to give them answer, but it is laid down as a rule for every man of the house of Israel, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to enquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his pretended piety: He comes to the prophet, who he expects will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer by punishing him for his impudence: I the Lord, who speak, and it is done, I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols. Observe, Those that set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers God uses to answer according to the multitude of his mercies, but bold intruders he answers according to the multitude of their idols, i. e. 1. According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and they are of their own setting up; their temptations are the stumbling-block of their iniquity, and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their course. 2. According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just such idolaters should have: God will punish them as he useth to punish idolaters

that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will send them to the god whom they have chosen, Judges x. 13, 14. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really, that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in shew and profession.

And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them, ver. 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; nay, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, is all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, condemn them, and are a terror to them. If God take them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgments, it is all by their own hearts. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. The house of Israel is ruined by its own hands, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Note, 1. The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God. 2. It is through some idol or other that the hearts of men are estranged from God, some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart that God should have.

4. The extent of this answer God had given them, to all the house of Israel, ver. 7, 8. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shews and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him, and at war with him. Observe, 1. To whom this declaration belongs; it concerns not only every one of the house of Israel, as before, ver. 4. but the stranger that sojourns in Israel; let him not think it will be an excuse for him in his idolatries that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and doth but worship the gods that his father served, and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not expect any benefit by Israel's oracles or prophets, unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even profelytes shall not be countenanced, if they be not sincere; a dissembled conversion is no conversion. 2. The description here given of hypocrites; they separate themselves from God by their fellowship with idols, they cut themselves off from their relation to God and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him. Note, Those that join themselves to idols, separate themselves from God; nor shall any be for ever separated from the vision and fruition of God, but such as now separate themselves from his service, and willfully withdraw their allegiance to him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to his prophets, with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to enquire of them concerning God; either to satisfy a vain curiosity, or stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience, or to get or save a reputation among men, but without any desire to be acquainted with God, or any design to be ruled by him. 3. The doom of those that thus trifle with God, and think to impose upon him, I the Lord will answer him by myself; let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him repent of his daring impiety; he shall have his answer, not by the words of the prophet, but by the judgments of God; and I will set my face against that man; which notes great displeasure against him, and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impudent sinner. The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause; but on the contrary, God will make him a sign and a proverb, i. e. will inflict such judgments upon him, as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him, his misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery; as when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites, Matt. xxiv. 51. God will make him an example, his judgments upon him shall be for warning to others to take heed of mocking God; for thus shall it be done to the man that separates himself from God, and yet pretends to enquire concerning him: The hypocrite thought to have passed for one of God's people, and to have crowded into heaven among them, but God will cut him off from the midst of his people, will discover him and pluck him out from the thickest of them; and by this, saith God, ye shall know that I am the Lord; by the discovery of hypocrites, it appears that God is omniscient; ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, but God doth; and by the punishment of hypocrites it appears he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, that will not be imposed upon.

5. The doom of those pretenders to prophecy, who give countenance to these pretenders to piety, ver. 9, 10. These hypocritical enquirers, though Ezekiel will give them no comfortable answer, yet hope to meet with some other prophets that will; and if they do, as perhaps they may, let them know that God permits those lying prophets to deceive them, in part of punishment: If the prophet, that flatters them, be deceived, and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, have suffered the temptation to be laid before him, and suffered him to yield to it, and over-ruled it for the hardening of those in their wicked courses that were resolved to go on in them. We are sure that God is not the author of sin, but we are sure that he is the Lord of all, and the Judge of sinners, and often makes use of one wicked man to destroy another, and so of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are sins in him who doth them, and so they are not from God; both are punishments to him to whom they are done, and so they are from God. We have a full instance of this in the story of Ahab's prophets, who were deceived by a lying spirit which God put into their mouths, 1 Kings xxii. 23, and another in those whom God gives up to strong delusions to believe a lie, because they receive not the love of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 11. But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet, I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him. When God has served his own righteous purposes by him, he shall be reckoned with for his unrighteous purposes; as when God had made use of the Chaldeans for the wasting of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their rage; so when he had made use of false prophets, and afterwards of false Christs, for the deceiving of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their falsehood. But herein we must acknowledge (as Calvin upon this place minds us) that God's judgments are a great deep, that we are incompetent judges of them, and though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings, to the satisfying and silencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be justified before all the world; and particularly in this instance, when the punishment of the prophet that flattered the hypocrite in his evil way, shall be as the punishment of the hypocrite that seeketh to him, and bespeaks smooth things only, Isa. xxx. 10. The ditch shall be the same to the blind leader and the blind follower.

6. The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom, ver. 6. Therefore, — Repent and turn yourselves from your idols; let this separate between you and them, that they separate between you and God; because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them; which notes not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with loathing and detestation: turn from them, as from abominations that you are sick of; and then you will be welcome to enquire of the Lord: Come now, and let us reason together.

7. The good issue of this, as to the house of Israel; therefore the pre-tending

tending prophets, and the pretending saints, shall perish together by the judgments of God; that, for being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed; that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, ver. 11. Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear and fear, and take warning: When we see what comes of those that go astray from God, we should thereby be engaged to keep close to him. And if the house of Israel go not astray, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing, it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too, whenever conscience is awakened; and therefore they shall no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God. Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin; and those who are so cleansed, shall not only be saved from ruin, but be intitled to all the privileges of God's people.

12. ¶ The word of the LORD came again to me saying, 13. Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: 14. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD. 15. ¶ If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: 16. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters: they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. 17. ¶ Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: 18. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. 19. ¶ Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: 20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. 21. For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? 22. ¶ Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way, and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. 23. And they shall comfort you when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.

The scope of these verses is to shew,

1. That national sins bring national judgments; when virtue is ruined and laid waste, every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too, ver. 13. When the land sinneth against me, when vice and wickedness become epidemical, when the land sinneth by trespassing grievously, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, then will I stretch forth mine hand upon it, for the punishment of it; the divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted, the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the concerns and interests of the nation: Grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

2. That God has variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations, and he has them all at command, and inflicts which he pleaseth. He did indeed refer it to David, what judgment he would be punished with, for his sin in numbering the people, for any of them would serve to answer the end, which was to lessen the numbers he was proud of; but David in effect referred it to God again, let us fall into the hands of the Lord; let him choose with what rod we shall be beaten. But he useth a variety of judgments, that it may appear he hath an universal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may see our dependence on him.

Four sore judgments are here instanced in. 1. Famine; the denying and withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miserable; God need not bring the staff of oppression, it is but breaking the staff of bread, and the work is soon done; he cuts off man and beast, by cutting off the provisions which nature makes for both in the annual products of the earth: God breaks the staff of bread, when, though we have bread, yet we are not nourished and strengthened by it, Hag. i. 6. Ye eat, but ye have not enough. 2. Hurtful beasts, noisome and noxious; either as poisonous, or as ravenous; God can make these to pass through the land, to increase in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, preying upon their flocks and herds, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts, none dare travel even in the high-roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions or other beasts of prey, as the children of Beth-el by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God and rebel against him, it is just with God that the inferior creatures should rise up in arms against man, Lev. xxvi. 22. 3. War; God often chastiseth sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it its commission, and orders what execution it shall do, ver. 17. He saith, Sword, go through the land. It is bad enough, if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it goes through the bowels of a land. Then by it God cuts off man and beast, horse and man; what execution the sword doth. God doth by it, for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs. 4. Pestilence; a dreadful disease, which hath sometimes depopulated cities; by it God pours out his

fury in blood, i. e. in death; the pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood was shed by the sword; for it is poisoned by the disease; the sickness we call it. See how miserable the case of mankind is, that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes! See how dangerous the case of sinners is against whom God has so many ways of fighting? so that though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them.

3. That when God's professing people revolt from him and rebel against him, they may justly expect a complication of judgments to fall upon them. God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation; but if Jerusalem, the holy city, become a harlot, God will send upon her all his four sore judgments, ver. 21. for the nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more severely will he reckon with them if they reproach that worthy name which they are called, and give the lie to that profession. They shall be punished seven times more.

4. That it is possible there may be, and commonly there are some few very good men, even in those places that by sin are ripened for ruin: It is no foreign supposition, that even in a land that has trespassed grievously, there may be three such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job; Daniel was now living, and at this time scarce arrived to the prime of his eminency, but he was already famous, at least this word of God concerning him would without fail make him so; but he was carried away into captivity with the first of all, Dan. i. 1. Some of the better sort of people in Jerusalem might perhaps think, if Daniel (of whose fame in the king of Babylon's court they had heard much) had but continued in Jerusalem, it had been spared for his sake, as the magicians in Babylon were. No, saith God, though you had him, who was so eminently good in bad times and places, as Noah in the old world, and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprieve should not be obtained. In the places that are most corrupt, and in the ages that are most degenerate, yet there is a remnant which God reserves to himself, and which still hold fast their integrity, and stand fair for the honour of delivering the land, as the innocent are said to do, Job xxii. 30.

5. That God oftentimes spares very wicked places for the sake of a few godly people in them. This is implied here, as the expectation of Jerusalem's friends in the day of its distress. Surely God will stay his controversy with us; for are there not some among us that are emptying the measure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their sins? and rather than God will destroy the righteous with the wicked, he will preserve the wicked with the righteous. If Sodom might have been spared for the sake of ten good men, sure Jerusalem may.

6. That such men, as Noah, Daniel, and Job, will prevail, if they can to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity when all flesh had corrupted their way, and for his sake, his family, though one of them was wicked Ham, was saved in the ark; Job was a great example of piety, and mighty in prayer for his children, for his friends; and God turned his captivity when he prayed. Those were very ancient examples, before Moses that great intercessor, and therefore God mentions them, to intimate, that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation was formed or founded, and would have such when it was ruined; for which reason, it should seem, those names were made use of, rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us, not to lessen the useful good men of our own day, by over-magnifying the ancients; let the children of the captivity know, that Daniel, their neighbour and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God rise up as great and good men now, as he did formerly, and do as much for them?

7. That when the sin of a people is come to its height, and the decree is gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the best men shall not prevail to take up the controversy. This is here asserted again and again, that though these three men were in Jerusalem at this time, yet they should deliver neither son nor daughter, not so much as the little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the little ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses, Numb. xiv. 31. No, the land shall be desolate, and God will not hear their prayers for it, though Moses and Samuel stood before him, Jer. xv.

1. Note, Abused patience will turn at last into inexorable wrath; and it should seem as if God would be more inexorable in Jerusalem's case than in another, ver. 6. because, beside the divine patience, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any people beside, which were the aggravations of their sin.

8. That though pious praying men may not prevail to deliver others, yet they shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness; so that though they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the property of it is altered; it is not that to them that it is to the wicked; it is unstung, and doth them no hurt; it is sanctified, and doth them good; sometimes their souls, i. e. their lives, are remarkably delivered, and given them for a prey; however, their souls, i. e. their spiritual interests, are secured; if their bodies be not delivered, yet their souls are: Riches indeed profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death, from so great a death, so many deaths are here threatened. This should encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apostasy, that if we do so, we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

9. That even then when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he reserves some to be the monuments of his mercy, ver. 22, 23. In Jerusalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet there shall be left a remnant, that shall not be cut off by any of those four judgments before-mentioned, but shall be carried into captivity, both sons and daughters, that shall be the seed of a new generation; the young ones that were not grown up to such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers were, who were therefore cut off as incurable, these shall be brought forth out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the victorious enemy, and behold they shall come forth to you that are in captivity, they shall make a virtue of necessity, and shall come the more willingly to Babylon, because so many of their friends are gone thither before them, and are there ready to receive them; and when they come, ye shall see their ways and their doings, i. e. you shall hear them make a free and ingenuous confession of the sins they had formerly been guilty of, and a humble profession of repentance for them, with promises of reformation; and you shall see instances of their reformation, shall see what good their affliction has done them, and how prudently and patiently they carry themselves under it. The good effect their narrow escape shall have upon them, it shall change their temper and conversation, and then make them new men. And this will redound, (1.) To the satisfaction of their brethren, they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways. Note, It is a very comfortable sight to see people, when they are under the rod, repenting and humbling themselves, justifying God, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we sorrow (as we ought to do) for the afflictions of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them. When those captives told their friends how

how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the calamities of Jerusalem, to the justice of God in punishing his own people so, and to the goodness of God, which now appeared to have had kind intentions in all; and thus *ye shall be comforted concerning all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem*, and, when you better understand the thing, shall not have such direful apprehensions concerning it as you have had. Note, It is a debt we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our afflictions to comfort them by letting them know it. (2.) It will redound to the honour of God: *Ye shall know that I have not done it without cause*, not without a just provocation, and yet not without a gracious design, and have accomplished that for which they were sent, then will appear the wisdom and goodness of God in sending them, and God will not only be justified, but glorified in them.

C H A P. XV.

Ezekiel has again and again in God's name foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem, but it should seem he finds it hard to reconcile himself to it, and to acquiesce in the will of God in this severe dispensation; and therefore God takes various methods to satisfy him, not only that it shall be so, but that there is no remedy, it must be so, it is fit it should be so; here, in this short chapter, he shows him (probably with design that he should tell the people) that it was as requisite Jerusalem should be destroyed, as that the dead and withered branches of a vine should be cut off and thrown into the fire. 1. The similitude is very elegant, ver. 1—5. but 2. The reddition of the similitude is very dreadful, ver. 6—8.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? 3. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? 4. Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? 5. Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? 6. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. 8. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet, we may suppose, was thinking what a glorious city Jerusalem was above any city in the world; it was the crown and joy of the whole earth; and therefore what pity it was that it should be destroyed; it was a noble structure, the city of God, and the city of Israel's solemnities but if these were the thoughts of his heart, God here returns an answer to them by comparing Jerusalem to a vine.

1. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a most valuable tree, none more so: it was one of those that was courted to have dominion over the trees, and the fruit of it is such as *cheers God and man*, Judges ix. 12, 13. it makes glad the heart, Psalm civ. 15. So Jerusalem was planted a choice and noble vine, wholly a right seed, Jer. ii. 21. and if it had brought forth fruit suitable to its character, as a holy city, it would have been the glory both of God and Israel: it was a vine which God's right hand had planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despicable, God had made strong for himself, Psalm lxxx. 15. to be to him for a name and for a praise.

2. But if it be not fruitful, it is good for nothing, it is as worthless and useless a product of the earth as even thorns and briars are: *What is the vine-tree*, if you take the tree by itself, without consideration of the fruit? *what is it more than any tree?* that it should have so much care taken of it, and so much cost laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it spread more than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? where it grows neglected and exposed: Or, as some read it, *What is the vine more than any tree*, if the branch of it be as the trees of the forest? i. e. if it bear no fruit, as forest trees seldom do, being designed for timber-trees, not fruit-trees. Now there are some fruit-trees, if they do not bear, yet the wood of them is of good use and may be made to turn to a good account; but the vine is none of those, if that do not answer its end as a fruit tree, it is worth nothing for a timber-tree. Observe,

(1.) How this similitude is expressed here: The wild vine, that is among the trees of the forest, or the empty vine, which Israel is compared to, Hos. x. 1. that bears no more fruit than a forest-tree, it is good for nothing, it is as useless as a briar, and more so, for that will add some sharpness to the thorny edge, which the vine branch will not do. He shews, 1. That it is fit for no use, the wood of it is not taken to do any work, one cannot so much as make a pin of it to hang a vessel upon, ver. 3. See how variously the gifts of nature are dispensed for the service of man! among plants, the roots of some, the seeds or fruits of others, the leaves of others, and of some the stalks are most serviceable to us; so, among trees, some are strong and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others weak but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unsightly, low and depending, yet of great use: Rachel is comely, but barren; Leah homely, but fruitful. 2. That therefore it is made use of for fuel; it will serve to heat the oven with. Because it is not meet for any work, it is cast into the fire, ver. 4. When it is good for nothing else, it is useful this way, and answers a very needful intention, for fuel is a thing we must have, and to burn any thing for fuel, which is good for other work is ill husbandry: *To what purpose is this waste?* The unfruitful vine is disposed of the same way with the briars and thorns, which are rejected, and whose end is to be burned, Heb. vi. 8. And what care is taken of it then? If a piece of solid timber be kindled, some body perhaps may snatch it as a brand out of the burning, and say, It is pity to burn it, for it may be put to some better use; but if the branch of a vine be on fire, and as usual, both the ends of it and the middle are kindled together, no body goes about to save it; when it was whole it was meet for no work,

much less when the fire has devoured it, ver. 5. even the ashes of it are not worth saving.

(2.) How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem:

1. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing; it has been as the vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God, when religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was kept up, many a joyful vintage was then gathered in from it; and while it continued so, God made a hedge about it; it was his pleasant plant, Isa. v. 7. he watered it every moment, and kept it night and day, Isa. xxvii. 3. but it was now become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, of a wild vine, such as we read of, 2 Kings iv. 39. a vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which being wild, bringeth forth wild grapes, Isa. v. 4. which are not only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious, Deut. xxxii. 32. their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. It is explained, ver. 8. *They have trespassed a trespass*, i. e. they have treacherously prevaricated with God, and perfidiously apostatized from him; for so the word signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the *ful* that has lost its savour, and is thenceforth good for nothing, Mark ix. 50. Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation being famous for a holy people, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth good for nothing; with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despicable people under the sun, trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great use in their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, since the preaching of the gospel, have been and are of no common service, not fit for any work.

2. Being so it is given to the fire for fuel, ver. 6. Note, Those that are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace, shall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; honour that will shine bright in that flaming fire, by which impenitent sinners will be for ever consumed: He will not be a loser at last by any of his creatures; *The Lord has made all things for himself*; yea even the wicked, that would not otherwise be for him, for the day of evil, Prov. xvi. 4. And they who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs, in them he will be glorified as the God to whom vengeance belongs. The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation, ver. 4. Samaria, and the cities of Judah, and now Jerusalem that was the midst of it, was thrown into the fire to be burnt too, for it is meet for no work, it will not be wrought upon by any of the methods God has taken to be serviceable to him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were like a vine-branch, rotten and awkward, and therefore, ver. 7. *I will set my face against them*, to thwart all their counsels, as they set their faces against God to contradict his word and defeat all his designs. It is decreed, the consumption is determined, *I will make the land quite desolate*, and therefore, when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them, ver. 7. the end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon: They that kept out of the way of the sword, perished by famine or pestilence: When one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, *surely the bitterness of death is past*, yet soon after they returned again with double violence, till they had made a full end. Thus they shall know that I am the Lord, a God of almighty power, when I set my face against them. Note, God shews himself to be the Lord, by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies, as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those against whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one trouble little hurt, will fall into another; though they come out of the pit, will be taken in the snare, Isa. xxiv. 18. though they escape the sword of Hazeel, will fall by that of Jehu, 1 Kings xix. 17. for evil pursues sinners: Nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for when God judgeth, first or last, he will overcome, and will be known by the judgments which he executeth. See Matt. 3. 10. John xv. 6.

C H A P. XVI.

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem, and very largely, in this chapter, he shews the prophet, and orders him to shew the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter, he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire: in this chapter he compares it to an adulteress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed; and he must therefore shew the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse is set forth, 1. The despicable and deplorable beginnings of that church and nation, ver. 3—6. 2. The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them, ver. 6—14. 3. Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to their services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent whoredom, ver. 15—31. 4. A threatening of terrible destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin, ver. 35—43. 5. An aggravation both of their sin and of their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria, ver. 44—59. 6. A promise of mercy in the close, which God would shew to a penitent remnant, ver. 60—63. And this is designed for admonition to us.

1. **A**GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. 4. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou was born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon, but as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them, chap. xxix. so Ezekiel, wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though

though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another, or an interfering with one another's business; for ministers have need of one another's help, both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed: This is his commission, *ver. 2. Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations*, i. e. her sins, set them in order before her. Note, 1. Sins are not only provocations which God is angry at, but *abominations* which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, *Jer. xlv. 4.* 2. The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion. 3. Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loath to know her abominations; so partial are men in their own favours that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it. 4. It is requisite that we should know our sins that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them. 5. It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, to know their abominations; to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements; to tell them plainly of their faults; *Thou art the man.*

Now that Jerusalem may be made to know her abominations, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her ill carriage towards him; and to magnify those favours, she is in these verses made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour, and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base born and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection or concern for.

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean: *Thy birth is of the land of Canaan*, *ver. 3.* i. e. thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite. The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but *strangers and sojourners*, had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own, but a burying-place: Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the court Abraham made to the children of Heth, *Gen. xxiii. 4-8.* and the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, *Gen. xlii. 7.*—*xxxiv. 30.* If the patriarchs at their first coming to Canaan had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had looked great in history; but instead of that they went from one nation to another, *Psalm cv. 13.* as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they were but few in number, yea very few: And yet this was not the worst, their fathers had served other gods in *Urr of the Chaldees*, *Josh. xxiv. 2.* even in Jacob's family there were strange gods, *Gen. xxxv. 2.* Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry! and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity die from the womb, if the knees prevent it not, *Job iii. 11, 12.* The children of Israel when they began to increase into a people and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but on the contrary were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build upon their families, no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, that had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, that should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to destroy this man-child as soon as it was born, *Rev. xii. 4.* ordered all the males to be slain, which it is likely occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work, by policies and stratagems, to preserve and nurse up their infant states; *Tanta molis erat Romanum condere gentem*, *Virg.* But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens, Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths had when they were first founded, but on the contrary was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, the navel string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, not swaddled, because not pitied, *ver. 4, 5.* Note, We owe the preservation of our infant-lives to that natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses towards new-born children. This infant is said to be cast out to the lothing of her person: It was a sign she was loathed by those that bare her, and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians, as we find *Gen. xlii. 32.*—*xlvi. 34.*

Some think, this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning: They were not only the weakest and fewest of all people, *Deut. vii. 7.* but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people: *God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people*, *Deut. ix. 6.* and Moses tells them there, *ver. 24.* *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.* They were not supplied, nor washed, nor swaddled; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but so it seemed good in his sight. And it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature: *As for our nativity in the day that we were born, we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God: Marvel not then that we are told we must be born again.*

6. ¶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. 7. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith

Vol. II. No. CXXXIV.*

the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. 9. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. 13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. 14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

In these verses we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation, in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

1. God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt, *ver. 6.* When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, loathed and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, then I said unto thee, Live. I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death. Those shall live, to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind, as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts towards it were thoughts of good, designing it life, and that more abundantly. By converting grace, he saith to the soul, Live.

2. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pitied them but *set his love upon them*, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but I looked upon thee, and behold, thy time was the time of love, *ver. 8.* It was the kindness and love of God our Saviour that lent Christ to redeem us, that lends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace; that was a time of love indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him! Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour, *Cant. viii. 10.*

3. He took them under his protection: I spread my skirt over thee, to shelter thee from wind and weather, and to cover thy nakedness, that the shame of it might not appear. Boaz spread his skirt over Ruth, in token of the special favour he designed her. Ruth iii. 9. God took them into his care, as an eagle bears her young ones upon her wings, *Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.* When God owned them for his people, and sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expression of the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, then he spread his skirt over them.

4. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under, *ver. 9.* Then washed I thee with water, to make thee clean, and anointed thee with oil, to make thee sweet, and supple thee. All the disgrace of their slavery was rolled away, when they were brought, with a high hand and a stretched out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God; when God said, *Israel is my son, my first-born: Let my people go, that they may serve me:* That word backed, as it was, with so many works of wonder, thoroughly washed away their blood; and when God led them under the convoy of the pillar of cloud and fire, he spread his skirt over them.

5. He multiplied them, and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned, *ver. 7.* before his spreading his skirt over them, because their numbers increased exceedingly, while they were yet bond-slaves in Egypt; they multiplied as the bud of the field in spring-time, they waxed great, exceeding mighty, *Exod. i. 7-20.* their breasts were fashioned, when they were formed into distinct tribes, and had officers of their own, *Exod. v. 19.* their hair grew when they grew numerous, whereas they had been naked and bare, very few, and therefore contemptible.

6. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what a glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last! how she is dignified! who at first had scarce her life given her for a prey. I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee; this was done at mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified, then thou becamest mine: God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life, he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his, his subjects and servants, that speaks their duty; his portion, his treasure, that speaks their privilege; and it is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

7. He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and she is gratified with abundance of them, *ver. 10, 11, 12, 13.* We need not be particular in the application of these, her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel, they had embroidered work to wear, shoes of fine badger's skins, linen girdles, and silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and ear-rings, and even a beautiful crown, or coronet; perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, *Gen. xv. 14.* They shall come out with great substance. Or it may be taken figuratively for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state: In a little time they came to excellent ornaments, *ver. 7.* The laws and ordinances which God gave them, were to them as ornaments of grace to the head, and chains about the neck, *Prov. i. 9.* God's sanctuary, which he set up among them, was a beautiful crown upon their head; it was the beauty of holiness.

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainties. Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; hanna, angels food; honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock: in Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, *Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.* Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, the hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.

9. He gave them a great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable; acceptable to their friends and allies, and formidable to their adversaries. Thou didst prosper into a kingdom, *ver. 13.* which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, *ver. 14.* Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; the nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, *Deut. iv. 7, 8.* Solomon's wisdom, and Solomon's temple were very much the renown of that nation; and if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must

own, it was the most *accomplished beauty* of all the nations of the earth; the beauty of it was *perfect*, you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people, but it was to be found in *Israel*, in *David's* and *Solomon's* time, when that kingdom was in its *zenith*; piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth, and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God. *It was perfect, faith God, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee, i. e. through the beauty of their holiness, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.* This was it that put a lustre upon all their other honours, and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually; sanctified souls are truly beautiful, they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and whatever *comeliness* they have, it is that which *God has put upon them*, and beautified them with, and he will be well-pleased with the work of his own hands.

15. ¶ But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. 16. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: *the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.* 17. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them. 18. And tookedst thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. 19. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith I fed thee*, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet favour: and *thus* it was faith the Lord GOD. 20. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter, 21. That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them? 22. And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, *and wast polluted in thy blood.* 23. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! faith the Lord GOD); 24. *That* thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. 25. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. 26. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. 27. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food; and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. 28. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. 29. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith. 30. How weak is thine heart, faith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; 31. In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; 32. *But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!* 33. They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. 34. And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which one would think they should have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor; that had been in all respects as a father and a husband to her.

1. Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they were guilty of; it began in the latter end of Solomon's time (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it) and from thence continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high degree impudent and barefaced. They not only worshipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

2. This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him, and embracing the bosom of a stranger: it is giving that affection and service to his rivals which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and desiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debaucheth the conscience, sears and hardens it, and those who by their idolatries dishonour the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame. God justly punisheth by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, *Rom. i. 23, &c.* It is a besetting, bewitching sin, and when men are given up to it they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful, scandalous sin, for those that have joined themselves to the Lord, to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here,

1. What were the causes of this sin; how came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? how came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, 1. They grew proud, *ver. 15. Thou trustedst to thy beauty*, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown. They thought because they were so complimented and admired by their neighbours, that further to ingratiate themselves with them and return their compliments, they must join with them in their worship, and conform themselves to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty; *Rara est concordia formæ atque pudicitia.* 2. They forgot their beginning, *ver. 22. Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth*, how poor and mean and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee, and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereby. Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality to consider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. 3. They were weak, in understanding and in resolution, *ver. 30. How weak is thy heart, seeing thou doest all these things?* Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to manage others, when they are far from being able to manage themselves.

2. What were the particulars of it.

(1.) They worshipped all the idols that came in their way; all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours, *ver. 15. Thou pouredst out thy fornication on every one that passed by, his it was.* They were ready to close with every temptation of this kind, though never so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it; as a common strumpet that prostitutes herself to all comers, and multiplies her whoredoms, *ver. 25.* Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of such!

(2.) They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high-places, with the fine rich clothing that God had given them, *ver. 16—18. Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours*, with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and hast played the harlot, i. e. worshipped idols thereupon; of this he saith, *The like things shall not come, neither shall it be so, i. e.* This is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these, without shewing my resentments.

(3.) They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them, *ver. 17. the jewels of my gold and my silver which I had given thee.* Note, It is God that gives us our gold and silver; the products of trade, of art and industry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in; it is *my silver and my gold*, though I have given it thee. It is his still, so as that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Caesar's. Would we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that it is *God's silver and his gold*? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their ear-rings.

(4.) They served their idols with the good things which God gave them for their own use, and to serve him with, *ver. 18. Thou hast set mine oil and my incense before them*, upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill deities; *my meat and fine flour and oil*, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and *wherewith I fed thee*, thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with; hast made an offering of it to them for a sweet favour, to purify them and procure acceptance with them: And thus it was, faith the Lord God: it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. *These things thou hast done.* He that knows all things knows it. See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families to honour them with; which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

(5.) They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this. See *Jer. vii. 31.—xix. 5.—xxxii. 35. Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters*, and not only made them to pass through the fire or between two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou hast sacrificed them to be devoured, *ver. 20.* Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was: Yet that was not the worst of it, it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children, more than in their gold and silver and their meat, they are *my children*, *ver. 21. the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, ver. 20.* He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his, and therefore the taking away of life, human life unjustly, is a mighty affront to the God of life. But the children of Israelites were his by a farther right, they were the children of the covenant; born in God's house. He had said to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed*; they had the seal of the covenant in their flesh from eight days old, they were to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree *inhuman*, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree *impious*. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for dying sacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices. How absurd was this, that the children which were *born to God* should be sacrificed to devils! Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church are to be looked upon as *born unto God and his children*; as such

such and under that character we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him, for *may he not do what he will with his own?* Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made, *ver. 20. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter?* which intimates, there were those that made a small matter of it, and turned it into a jest. Note, There is no sin so heinous, so apparently heinous, which men of profligate consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spiritual whoredom a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

(6.) They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and join with them in the worship of their idols, *After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private* (for which, *woe unto thee*, that comes in a sad parenthesis, speaking those in a woeful condition that are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it) *thou hast at length arrived to such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it: Thou hast long had a whore's heart*, but now thou art come to have a whore's forehead, and cannot blush, *ver. 23, 24, 25. Thou hast built there an eminent place, a brothel-house*, so the margin reads it, and such their idol temples were. *Thou hast made thee a high-place for one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way*; and again, *ver. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile; and even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries, thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it.* The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours: much more was their beauty abhorred by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves that bring a reproach on their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of others loathing, which men have made the matter of their own pride.

3. What were the aggravations of this sin.

1. They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As, (1.) The Egyptians, they were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most sottish senseless idolatries; they had of old abused them by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings were always either cruel or false to them, and yet so infatuated were they that they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God. (2.) The Assyrians, they had also been vexatious to Israel, and yet *thou hast played the whore with them*, *ver. 28.* though they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols and their superstitious usages; and so *hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea*, hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country, and hast imported them into the land of Canaan, enfranchised and established them there. Thus Mr. George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least;

*That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames
By letting in them both, pollute her streams.*

2. They had been under the rebukes of providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them, *ver. 27. I have stretched out my hand over thee, to threaten and frighten thee, so God did before he laid his hand upon them to ruin and destroy them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by lesser judgments; he did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread, he diminished their ordinary food, cut them short before he cut them off.* When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be destroyed, he delivered them to the daughters of the Philistines to be ridiculed for their idolatries; for they hated them, and though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who were grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours; who changed their gods, whereas other nations did not change their's, *Jer. ii. 10, 11.* for this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them, *2 Chron. xxviii. 18.* but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to, they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, *Amos iv. 11.*

3. They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom; *thou couldst not be satisfied*, *ver. 28.* and again, *ver. 29.* when they had multiplied their idols and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still they were enquiring after new gods and new fashions in worship. They that in sincerity join themselves to the true God find enough in him for their satisfaction; and though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God; but they that forsake this living fountain for broken cisterns will find themselves soon satisfied, but never satisfied; have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still enquiring after more.

4. They were at great expence upon their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries: Harlots generally had their hires, but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, *ver. 31, 32, 33, 34.* In this respect the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms: Others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee; art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee; others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, i. e. the gifts which God had graciously given thee, to thine idols; herein like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain as harlots do, but purely for the sin's sake. Note, spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as their's after idols were, are oftentimes as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by it, are at great expence upon it, such are transgressors without cause, *Psal. xxv. 3.* wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? for what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these. Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea though they have the greatest advantages to be better and do better. And the way of sin is down-hill. *Niti-mur in relictum.*

35. ¶ Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: 36. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; 37. Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. 38. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. 39. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. 40. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. 41. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more, 42. So will I make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. 43. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime; this notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here hath sentence passed upon her. It is uttered in with solemnity, *ver. 35.* The prophet as the judge in God's name calls to her, *O harlot hear the word of the Lord.* Our Saviour preached to harlots for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, notes the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous; *how is the faithful city become a harlot!* Rome is so represented in the Revelation; then when it is marked for ruin as Jerusalem here, *Rev. xvii. 1. Come, and I will shew thee the judgments of the great whore.* And those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord, and shall all tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

1. The crime is repeated, and the articles of the charge summed up, *ver. 36.* and (as is usual) aggravated, *ver. 43.* for when God speaks in wrath he will be justified, and clear when he judgeth, clear when he is judged; and sinners when they are condemned shall have their sins set in order before them, that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, (1.) The violation of the two first commandments of the first table, by idolatry; which is here called her whoredoms with her lovers, so the called them, *Hos. ii. 12.* because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with all the idols of her abominations, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. (2.) The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; *the blood of thy children which thou dost give unto them.* It is not strange if those that have cast off God and his law, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, (1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves: hereby thy filthiness was poured out, i. e. the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou thereby exposed to contempt. God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins. (2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins; *Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth*, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished, *ver. 43.* And, (3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God whom they ought to have pleased; *thou hast fretted me in all these things*; not only angered me but grieved me; it is a strange expression, and one would think enough to melt a heart of stone; that the great God, who cannot admit any uneasiness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as fretting to him; *forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*

2. The sentence is passed in general: *I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged*, *ver. 38.* and those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death. Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice but in jealousy, not only as a righteous judge, but as an injured and incensed husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, *Prov. vi. 34, 35.* He will recompense their way upon their head, *ver. 43.* In all the judgments God executeth upon sinners we must see their own way recompensed upon their head; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured; it is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

(1.) This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to public shame, *ver. 37.* Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world; care is here taken to bring spectators together, *all them that thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure*, they shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning, and prevent their own like ruin; and those also whom thou hast hated, who will insult over thee, and triumph in thy fall. Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered around her, but gathered against her; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians shall now contribute to her ruin. As when a man's ways please the Lord he maketh

maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him, so when a man's ways displease the Lord, he maketh even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue shall see them stripped; and perhaps help to strip them of all their other ornaments; to see the nakedness of the land will they come. It is added to the same purpose, ver. 41. *I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women*, thou shalt be made an example of, in terrorem, that others may see and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

(2.) The criminal is condemned to die, for her sins are such as death is the wages of, ver. 40. *They shall bring up a company*, i. e. a company shall be brought up against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords, so great a death, so many deaths in one is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

(3.) The estate of the criminal is confiscated, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her, ver. 39. *They shall throw down thine eminent place*, and ver. 41. *they shall burn thine houses*, as the habitations of ill women are destroyed in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours shall be an offence to them, and even they shall break them down. It was long the complaint even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that the high places were not taken away, but now the army of the Chaldeans when they lay all waste shall break them down; if iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

(4.) Thus both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and an end put to both. *Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot*, i. e. there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall give no more hire, because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall not give hire any more, ver. 41. *Then thou shalt not commit this lewdness of sacrificing thy children*, which was a crime provoking above all thine abominations, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice, ver. 43. Or, it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment, they shall take warning, and shall do no more presumptuously. The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever from playing the harlot, it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry, and then all shall be well when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin; then ver. 42. *my jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet and no more angry*. When we begin to be at war with sin, God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs, God's jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. His fury shall rest upon them, and not remove; compare this with that doom of unbelievers, John iii. 36. *the wrath of God abideth on them*. They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversities, Isa. i. 24. is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and mercy were contending, but now he is quiet; as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners; wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

44. ¶ Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*. 45. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lotheth their husbands and their children; your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 46. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. 47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. 48. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. 49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. 51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. 52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53. When I shall bring again thy captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: 54. That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. 55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former

estate. 56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride. 57. Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despite thee round about. 58. Thou hast borne thy lewdness, and thine abominations, saith the LORD. 59. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophet here further shews Jerusalem her abomination, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and shewing that she was worse than any of them; and therefore should like them be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good, if we are but as good as such and such that are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad if we be no worse than such and such, who though bad were not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shews Jerusalem,

1. That she was as bad as her mother, i. e. as the accursed devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land before her. They that use proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*, ver. 44. She is even mother's own child, the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that she loathed her husband and her children, she had all the marks of an adulteress, and that is the character of the daughter, she forsakes the guide of her youth, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought Israel into Canaan he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of the men of that land, who went before them, for which it had spued them out, Lev. xviii. 27, 28. the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, would be a continual temptation to them; but they learned their way and trod in their steps, and were as well affected to the idols of Canaan as ever they were, Psalm cvi. 38. and thus in respect of imitation it might truly be said, that their mother was a Hittite, and their father an Amorite, ver. 45. for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

2. That she was worse than her sisters Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses too, that loathed their husbands and their children, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, *a-la-mode*, that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and her sisters the prophet here enlargeth, that he might either shame them into repentance, or justify God in their ruin. Observe,

1. Who Jerusalem's sisters were, ver. 45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the elder, or rather the greater sister, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel; if Jerusalem look northward, this is partly on her left hand; this city of Samaria, and the towns and villages that were as daughters to that mother city; these had been lately destroyed for their spiritual whoredom; Sodom and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters dwelt at Jerusalem's right hand, and was her lesser sister; less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria, and these were of old destroyed for their corporeal whoredom, Jude 7.

2. Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sisters, particularly Sodom's, ver. 49. *This was the iniquity of Sodom*; it is implied, and this is thine iniquity too, *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*; their going after strange flesh, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known: But those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to these more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were, (1.) *Pride*, in which the heart lifts up itself above and against both God and man; pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the garden of the Lord into a hell upon earth. It was the pride of the Sodomites that they despised righteous Lot, and would not bear to be reproved by him, and this ripened them for ruin. (2.) *Gluttony*, here called *fulness of bread*. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves with it, eat to excess and drank to excess, and made that the gratification of their lusts which was given them to be the support of their lives. (3.) *Idleness, abundance of idleness*, a dread of labour and a love of ease. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came easily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, which disposed them to all that abominable filthiness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an inlet to much sin; the men of Sodom that were idle were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Gen. xiii. 13. The standing waters gather filth, and the sitting bird is the fowler's mark. When David rose from off his bed at evening he saw Bathsheba—*Quæritur. Agrippinus quæritus adulter, in promptu causâ est, desidio userat*.—(4.) *Oppression*, neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy; probably it is implied, that she weakened their hands and broke their arms, however it was bad enough, that when she had so much wealth, and consequently power, and interest, and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor; in providing for whose wants those that themselves are full of bread may employ their time well, they need not be so abundantly idle, as too often they are. These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these were Jerusalem's sins; their pride, the cause of their sins, is mentioned again, ver. 50. *they were haughty*; with the horrid effects of their sins, their abominations which they committed before God. Men arrive gradually to the height of impiety and wickedness; *nemo repente fit turpissimus*. But where pride has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded those of Sodom and Samaria; were more heinous in the sight of God, either in themselves, or by reason of several aggravations. *Thou hast not only walked after their ways and trod in their steps, but hast quite outdone them in wickedness*, ver. 47. *Thou thoughtest it a very little thing to do as they did; didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners and silly ones*, thou wouldst be more cunning, more daring in wickedness; wouldst triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion; if a man will break, let him break for something; thus thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. Jerusalem was more polite and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more absolute and arbitrary, and therefore had the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and shedding malignant influences around her than Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple and the ark and the priesthood, and kings of the house of David, and therefore the wickedness of that holy city, that was so dignified, so near, so dear to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedness

ness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has not done as thou hast done, ver. 48. This agrees with what Christ saith, *Matth. xi. 24. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.* The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked, and yet Samaria has not committed half of thy sins, ver. 51. has not worshipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jerusalem were guilty of Sodom's sins, sodomy itself not excepted, *1 Kings xiv. 24. 2 Kings xxiii. 7.* And though the *Dead-sea*, the standing monument of Sodom's sin and ruin bordered upon their country, *Numb. xxxiv. 12.* and that sulphureous lake was always under their nose, God having taken away Sodom and her daughters in such way and manner as he saw good, as he saith here, ver. 50. so as one thing should effectually make their overthrow an *ensample to those that after should live ungodly*, *2 Pet. ii. 6.* yet they did not take warning, but multiplied their abominations more than they; and, (1.) By this they justified Sodom and Samaria, ver. 51. They pretended in their haughtiness and superciliousness to judge them, and in the days of old when they retained their integrity they did judge them, ver. 52. But now they justify them comparatively, *Sodom and Samaria are more righteous than thou*, i. e. less wicked; it will look like some extenuation of their sins, that as bad as they were Jerusalem was worse, though it was God's own city: Not that it will serve for a plea to justify Sodom, but to condemn Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samaria will rise up in judgment. (2.) For this they thought themselves to be greatly ashamed; thou who hast judged thy sisters, and cried out shame on them, now bear thine own shame, for thy sins which thou hast committed, which though of the same kind with theirs, yet being committed by thee are more abominable than theirs, ver. 52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin, thou shalt bear thy shame, or as inviting them to repentance, be thou confounded, and bear thy shame: take the shame to thyself that is due to thee; and then it may be hoped sinners will forsake their sins, when they begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And therefore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall lie that they may be confounded in all that they have done, because they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, ver. 54. Note, There is nothing in sin which we have more reason to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in that for which they must be grieved, or they are undone. Another reason why they must now be ashamed is, because in the day of their prosperity they had looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours; thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of thy pride, ver. 56. they thought Sodom not worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, little dreaming that Jerusalem would at length lie under a worse and more scandalous character than Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps come to stand upon a level with those they condemn: Or Sodom was not mentioned, i. e. the warning designed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin was not regarded. If the Jews had but talked more frequently and seriously to one another, and to their children concerning the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighteousness, it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their steps; but they kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the mention of it; and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, *Isa. i. 10.* Note, Those are but preparing judgments for themselves that will not take notice of God's judgment upon others.

4. What desolations God had brought and was bringing upon Jerusalem, for these wickednesses wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria. (1.) She hath already long ago been disgraced, and fallen into contempt among her neighbours, ver. 57. Before her wickedness was discovered; before she came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, yet she bore the just punishment of her secret and more concealed lewdness, when she fell under the reproach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philistines, who were said to despise her, and be ashamed of her, ver. 27. and of all that were round about her; which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and soon after another by the Philistines, *2 Chron. xxviii. 5-18.* Note, Those that disgrace themselves by yielding to their lusts will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable, that before God brought potent enemies upon them for their destruction he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable for their reproach; and if lesser judgments would do the work God would not send greater. In this thou hast borne thy lewdness, ver. 58. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation, shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion. (2.) She is now in captivity, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lewdness, ver. 58. but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking, ver. 59. I will deal with thee as thou hast done, i. e. I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant; which seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers at mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself; they flattered themselves with a conceit, that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, notwithstanding their provocations, he would do so still: no, saith God, you have broken covenant with me, have despised both the promises of the covenant, and the obligations of it, and therefore I will deal with thee as thou hast done. Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God, have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people. (3.) The captivity of the wicked Jews and their ruin, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take, ver. 53-55. When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to their former estate. But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, i. e. those who now remained there, whom God would deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, *Jer. xxiv. 9, 10.* sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt-sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes who had been as bad or worse than they in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall together; the bad ones of both shall perish together, the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do, must expect to fare as they fare; Let mine enemy be as the wicked.

60. ¶ Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth; and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when

thou shalt receive thy sisters; thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. 62. And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: 63. That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

Here in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin, and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered: mercy is reserved for those that shall come after, as was when God swore in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt, that they should not enter into Canaan, yet (saith God) your little ones shall; so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria, (ver. 53-55.) and of Jerusalem with them is a promise, and it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotius, and some of the Jewish writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, *Jer. xlviii. 47-xlix. 6.* as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are without doubt a precious promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that repentance and remission of sins which should then be preached with success to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Now observe here,

1. From whence this mercy should take rise; from God himself; and his remembering his covenant with them, ver. 60. Nevertheless though they had been so provoking, and God had been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet I will remember my covenant with thee, that covenant which I made with thee in the days of thy youth, and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant, ver. 59. I will remember it, and it shall flourish again. See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant way, for thus the mercies of it come to be sure mercies and everlasting, *Isa. lv. 3.* and while this root stands firm in the ground there is hope of the tree though it be cut down, that through the fount of water it will bud again. We do not find that they put him in the mind of the covenant, but ex mero motu he remembers it as he had promised, *Lev. xxvi. 42. Then will I remember my covenant and will remember the land.* He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant, no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, the word which he commanded (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to a thousand generations.

2. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy, ver. 61. Thou shalt remember thy ways, thine evil ways, God will put thee in mind of them, will set them in order before thee, that thou mayest be ashamed of them. Note, God's good work in us commeth and keepeth pace with his good-will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering our sin against ourselves. And if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they have been, and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and when we are so we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

3. What the mercy is that God has in reserve for them. (1.) He will take them into covenant with himself, ver. 60. I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; and again, ver. 62. I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all true penitents that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that every transgression of the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. (2.) He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them, ver. 61. Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are round about thee, thine elder and thy younger, greater than thou art and lesser, ancient nations and modern, and I will give them unto thee for daughters, i. e. they should be founded, nursed, taught, and educated by that gospel, that word of the Lord which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above and which is free, to be the mother of us all, *Gal. iv. 26.* They shall be thy daughters but not by the covenant, i. e. not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion and subjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion. Or, not by thy covenant, i. e. not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure, such a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations; no, they shall be thy daughters by my covenant, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in consort, as an indenture tripartite: I will be a father, a common father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And when thou shalt receive them thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways wherein thou hast conformed to them. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou hast been in the day of thine apostasy.

4. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

1. God will hereby be glorified; ver. 62. Thou shalt know that I am the Lord. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power and faithful to his covenant; and thou shalt know it, who hast hitherto lived as if thou didst not know or believe it. It had often been said in wrath, Ye shall know that I am the Lord, shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, ye shall know it to your comfort; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us, that all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

2. They shall hereby be more humbled and abased for sin, ver. 63. That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it, and call thyself a thousand times unwise, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive because of thy shame. Note, Those that rightly remember their sins will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions; to be dumb and not open their mouths against what God doth. But that which is most observable is, that all this shall be when I am pacified towards thee, saith the Lord God. Note, It is the gracious ingenuity of true penitents, that the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended. God is in Jesus Christ pacified towards us; he is our peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself; now the consideration of this

this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repenting because *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The prodigal, after he had received the kils, which allured him that his father was pacified towards him, was ashamed and confounded, and said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee*. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increased.

C H A P. XVII.

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah; and bringing ruin upon them for their treachery in breaking covenant with him; in this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon, for when God came to contend with them he found many grounds of his controversy. The thing was now indooing, Zedekiah was practising with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had sworn to him. For this God by the prophet here, (1.) Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, ver. 1—10. And the reddition of that parable, ver. 11—21. But in the close, (2.) He promiseth hereafter to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, ver. 22—24.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, long winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: 4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. 5. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree. 6. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. 7. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. 9. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east-wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew. 11. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12. Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; 13. And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: 14. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. 15. But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? 16. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him, in the midst of Babylon he shall die. 17. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 18. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, (when lo, he had given his hand), and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. 20. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21. And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all wind: and ye shall know that I the LORD hath spoken it.

We must take all these verses together, that we may have the parable and the reddition of it at one view before us, because they will illustrate one another.

1. The prophet is appointed to put forth a riddle to the house of Israel, ver. 2. not to puzzle them, as Samson's riddle was put forth to the Philistines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obscurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture and another another, as is usual in expounding riddles; no, he is presently to tell them the meaning of it; *Let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret*, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. But he must deliver this message in a riddle or parable, that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themselves, and might the better remember it, and tell it to others. For these reasons God often used similitudes by his servants the prophets, and Christ himself opened his mouth in parables. Riddles and parables are used for an amusement to ourselves, and an entertainment to our friends, the prophet must make use of these to see if in this dress the things of God might find acceptance, and insinuate themselves into the minds of a careless people. Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching, and their preaching too into their familiar discourse; that there may not be so vast a dissimilitude as with some there is between what they say in the pulpit, and what they say out.

2. He is appointed to expound this riddle to the rebellious house, ver. 12. though being rebellious they might justly have been left in ignorance, to see and hear, and not perceive, yet the thing shall be explained to them. *Know ye not what these things mean?* they that knew the story, and what was now in agitation, might make a shrewd guess at the meaning of this riddle, but that they might be left without excuse, he is to give it them in plain terms, stripped of the metaphor. But the enigma was first propounded for them to study on a while, and to send to their friends at Jerusalem, that they might enquire after and expect the solution of it some time after.

Let us now see what the matter of this message is:

1. Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age, and had reigned in Jerusalem but three months, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2 Kings xxiv. 12. This in the parable is represented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of a cedar, and carrying it into a land of traffic, a city of merchants, ver. 3, 4. which is explained, ver. 12. The king of Babylon took the king of Jerusalem, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps towards the making of her nest. Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's vision is a lion, the king of beasts, Dan vii. 4. there he has eagles wings, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests. Here in this parable he is an eagle, the king of birds; a great eagle, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones suck up blood, Job xxxix. 30. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the great and long wings of an eagle; the people are numerous, for it is full of feathers; the court splendid, for it has divers colours, which look like embroidering, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant; the royal family is the cedar, Jehoiachin is the top branch, the top of the young twigs, which he crops off; Babylon is the land of traffick and city of merchants where it is set. And the king of Judah being of the house of David, will think himself much degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradersmen, but he must make the best of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, ver. 5, 6. His name was Mattaniah, the gift of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah, the justice of the Lord, to mind him to be just like the God he called his, for fear of his justice. This was one of the seed of the land, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was planted in a fruitful field, for to Jerusalem as yet was; he placed it by great waters, where it would be likely to grow, like a willow tree, which grows quick, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed or expected to be a stately tree. He set it with care and circumspection; so some read it; he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. He took of the king's seed, so it is explained, ver. 13. and made a covenant with him, that he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he had it as his vassal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He took an oath of him, made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13. He also took away the mighty of the land, the chief of the men of war, partly as hostages for the performance of the covenant, and partly that the land being thereby weakened the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation to break his league. What he designed we are told, ver. 14. That the kingdom might be base, in respect both of honour and strength, might neither be a rival with its powerful neighbours, nor a terror to its feeble ones as it had been, that it might not lift up itself to vie with the kingdom of Babylon, or to bear down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that by keeping of this covenant it might stand, and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be like the most High, Isa. xiv. 14. to have all about him subject to him. Now see here, (1.) How sad a change sin made with the royal family of Judah; time was when all the nations about were tributaries to that, now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but is itself become a tributary. *How is the gold become dim! Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and profane their crowns by casting them to the ground.* (2.) How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting those terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. A man may live very comfortably and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part and make a figure as formerly. A kingdom may stand firm and safe, though it do not stand so high as it hath sometimes done, and so may a family.

3. Zedekiah, while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon, did very well, and if he would but have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he had done better, and by that means might soon have recovered his former dignity, ver. 6. This plant grew, and though it was set as a willow-tree, and little account was made of it, yet it became a spreading vine of low stature, a great blessing to his own country, and his fruits making glad their hearts; and it is better be a spreading vine of low stature, than a lofty cedar of no use. Nebuchadnezzar was pleased, for the branches turned towards him, and rested on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his share of the fruits of this vine; The roots thereof too were under him, and at his dispose. The Jews had reason to be pleased, for they sat under their own vine, which brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs, and looked pleasant and promising. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon this provoking people; how God gave them respite, and so gave them space to repent. He made their kingdom base, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it easy for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatened might be prevented.

4. Zedekiah

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well, but grew impatient of the disgrace of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and to get clear of it entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him, or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country, for as he had laid before, *ver. 6.* to aggravate his treachery he shews again, *ver. 8.* what a fair way he was in to be confederate; *He was planted in a good soil by great waters*, his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled in a little time, so that if he had dealt faithfully he might have been a goodly vine. But there was another great eagle that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the king of Egypt, *ver. 7.* Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two great eagles, *birds of prey.* This great eagle of Egypt is said to have *great wings*, but not to be *long-winged* as the king of Babylon, because though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is said to have many leathers, much wealth, and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but really were no more than as *many feathers.* Zedekiah promising himself liberty, made himself a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now this vine did secretly and under-hand bend her roots towards the king of Egypt that great eagle, and after a while did openly shoot forth her branches towards him, give him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, *that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation*, whereas it was planted by great waters, and did not need any assistance from him. This is expounded, *ver. 15.* Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in sending his ambassadors into Egypt; that they might give him horses and much people, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God! God promised they should be a numerous people, as the land of the sea, yet now if their king had occasion for much people, he must send to Egypt for them, they being for sin *minished and brought low*, *Psal. cvii. 39.* See also the folly of fretful discontented spirits, that ruin themselves by striving to mend themselves, whereas they might be easy and happy enough, if they would but make the best of that which is.

5. God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter destruction of him and his kingdom, and in displeasure against him passeth that doom upon him for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is represented in the parable, *ver. 9—19.* by the plucking up of this vine by the roots, the cutting off the fruit, and the withering of the leaves, the leaves of her spring, when they are in their greenness, *Job viii. 12.* before they begin in autumn to wither of themselves; the project shall be blasted, it shall utterly wither, the affairs of this perfidious prince shall be ruined past retrieve; as a vine when the east wind blasts it, so that it shall be fit for nothing but the fire, as we had it in that parable, *chap. xv. 4.* it shall wither even in the furrows where it grew, though they were never so well watered. It shall be destroyed without great power or many people to pluck it up, for what need is there of raising the militia to pluck up a vine? Note, God can bring great things to pass without ado; he needs not great power and many people to effect his purposes, a handful will serve if he pleaseth. He can without any difficulty ruin a sinful king and kingdom, and make no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbereth the ground.

In the reddition of the parable the sentence is very largely recorded: *shall he prosper?* *ver. 15.* can he expect to do ill and fare well? nay, shall he that doth such wicked things escape? shall he break the covenant, and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just punishment of his treachery? No, can he expect to do ill, and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom:

1. It is ratified by the oath of God, *ver. 16.* *As I live, faith the Lord God, he shall die for it.* This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be. God *swears in his wrath*, as he did, *Psal. xcv. 11.* Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath for comfort to his saints, so are his threatenings for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives and is happy, I may add, and as long, so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die, and be miserable.

2. It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he has been guilty of.

(1) He had been very ungrateful to his benefactor; who had made him king, and undertook to protect him; had made him a prince, when he might as easily have made him a prisoner. Note, it is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us. (2) He had been very false to him whom he had covenanted with; this is mostly insisted on. He despised the oath, when his conscience or friends minded him of it he made a jest of it, put on a daring resolution, and broke it, *ver. 15, 16, 18, 19.* He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, *That princes ought not to be slaves to their word any further than is for their interest.* That which aggravates Zedekiah's perfidiousness was, that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, was, (1.) A solemn oath; an emphasis is laid upon this, *ver. 18.* *When, lo, he had given his hand, as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his subject, but as his friend; the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts.* (2.) A sacred oath. God faith, *ver. 19.* it is mine oath that he has despised, and my covenant that he hath broken. In every solemn oath God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and invoked as a judge and revenger of his treachery, if he now swear falsely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called the oath of God, *Ecc. viii. 2.* as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are ministers of God to us for good, *Rom. xiii. 4.* Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will recompense upon his own head, *ver. 19.* the treppis which he hath trespassed against God, for which God will plead with him, *ver. 20.* Note, Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse, (1.) That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might sure set him above the obligation of oaths; no, though kings are gods to us they are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. (2.) Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome faith, *No faith is to be kept;* no, though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge his quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to all men; and if the professors of the true religion deal perfidiously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will the more surely and severely punish it, because by it they give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, *O Jesus, are these thy Christians?* (3.) Nor would it justify him that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was made upon a valuable consideration. He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he should be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon, and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not ob-

serve the terms. Let him know then that having despised the oath and broken the covenant, he shall not escape. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this would be to be punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who break covenant with God, when to they had given their hand upon it that they would be faithful; who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? betwixt the covenants there is no comparison.

3. It is particularized in divers instances wherein the punishment is made to answer the sin. (1.) He had rebelled against the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon should be his effectual conqueror; in the place where that king dwells whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die, *ver. 16.* He thinks to get out of his hands, but he shall fall more than before into his hands; God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him; *I will spread my net upon him*, *ver. 20.* God has a net for those that deal perfidiously and think to escape his righteous judgments in which they shall be taken and held, that would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon, thither will I bring him, faith God, and plead with him there. Men will justly be forced upon that calamity which they endeavour by sin to flee from. (2.) He had relied upon the king of Egypt, and the king of Egypt should be his ineffectual helper. Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war, *ver. 17.* shall do him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces; he shall not assist him in the siege by casting up mounts and building forts, nor in battle by cutting off many persons. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that arm of flesh which we trust in, and stay ourselves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former like occasion, *Ish. xxx. 7.* *The Egyptians shall help in vain.* They did so, for though upon the approach of the Egyptian army the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again and took it. It should seem the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough, but no goodwill to help Zedekiah. Note, Those who deal treacherously with those that put a confidence in them, will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah saved himself upon; he had bands of his own to stand by him; but those bands, though we may suppose they were veteran troops, and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, yet they shall become fugitives, shall quit their posts and make the best of their way, and shall fall by the sword of the enemy; and the remains of them shall be scattered, *ver. 21.* This was fulfilled when the city was broken up and all the men of war fled, *Jer. lii. 7.* *Then ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it.* Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22. ¶ Thus faith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: 23. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

When the royal family of Judah was brought to desolation by the captivity of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, it might be asked, what is now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that *his children should sit upon his throne for evermore*? Do the *sure mercies* of David prove thus *untrue*? To which it is sufficient for the silencing of the objectors to answer, that the promise was conditional, if they will keep my covenant then they shall continue, *Psal. cxxxii. 12.* But David's posterity broke the condition, and so forfeited the promise. But the unbelief of man shall not invalidate the promise of God. He will find out another seed of David, in which it shall be accomplished; and that is promised in these verses.

1. The house of David shall again be magnified, and out of its ashes another phoenix shall arise. The metaphor of a tree which was made use of in the threatening is here presented in the promise *ver. 22, 23.* This promise had its accomplishment in part when Zerubbabel, a branch of the house of David, was raised up to head the Jews in their return out of captivity, and to rebuild the city and temple, and re-establish their church and state; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, who was a root out of a dry ground, and to whom God, according to promise, gave the throne of his father David, *Luke i. 32.*

2. God himself undertakes the reviving and restoring of the house of David. Nebuchadnezzar was the great eagle that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David, in a dependence upon him, *ver. 5.* But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered and was plucked up. Well, faith God, the next shall be of my planting, *I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will set it.* Note, As men have their designs, God also has his designs; but his will prosper when theirs are blasted. Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, *Dan. v. 19.* But those kingdoms soon had an end, whereas the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, *Dan. ii. 44.*

3. The house of David is revived in a tender one cropped from the top of his young twigs; Zerubbabel was so, what was in him that was hopeful was but the day of small things, *Zech. iv. 10.* yet before him great mountains were made plain. Our Lord Jesus was the highest branch of the high cedar, the furthest of all from the root, for soon after he appeared the house of David was all cut off and extinguished, but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was taken from the top of the young twigs, for he is the man, the branch, a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground, *Ish. liii. 2.* But a branch of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

4. This branch is planted in a high mountain, *ver. 22.* In the mountain of the height of Israel, *ver. 23.* thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raised up his son Jesus, sent him to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel that were scattered upon the mountains; set him his king upon his holy hill of Zion, sent forth the gospel from mount Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, there in the height of Israel, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as conspicuous and illustrious, was the Christian church first planted; the churches of Judea were the most primitive churches.

The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there, but who can pluck up what God will plant?

4. From thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was set as a tender branch which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable; those of other nations, fowl of every wing, put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard-seed, but became like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning small, but its latter end increasing to admiration. When the Gentiles flocked into the church, then did the fowl of every wing (even the birds of prey, which those preyed upon, as the wolf and the lamb feeding together, *Isa. xi. 6.*) come and dwell under the shadow of this goodly cedar. See *Dan. iv. 21.*

2. God himself will herein be glorified, ver. 24. The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world, shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that God is the king of all the earth, *Psal. xlvii. 7.* Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs. *All the trees of the field shall know,* (1.) That the tree which God will have to be brought down and dried up shall be so, though it be never so high and stately, never so green and flourishing, Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advancements nor internal endowments, will secure men from humbling withering providences. (2.) That the trees which God will have to be exalted, and to flourish, shall so be, shall so do, though never so low, and never so dry. The house of Nebuchadnezzar, that now makes so great a figure, shall be extirpated; and the house of David, that now makes so mean a figure, shall become famous again; and the Jewish nation, that is now despicable, shall be considerable. The kingdom of Satan, that has borne so long, so large a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, that was looked upon with contempt, shall be established. The Jews that in respect of church privileges had been high and green shall be thrown out; and the Gentiles that had been low and dry trees shall be taken in their room, *Isa. liv. 1.* All the enemies of Christ shall be abased, and made his footstool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced. *I the Lord have spoken,* it is the decree, the declared decree that Christ must be exalted, must be the head-stone of the corner; and *I have done it,* i. e. I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. With men saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. What he hath spoken we may be sure he will do, nor shall one iota or tittle of his word fall to the ground, for he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent, either of his threatenings or of his promises.

C H A P. XVIII.

Perhaps in the reading of some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned in them, (though they also were written for our learning) but this chapter at first view appears highly and nearly to concern us all very highly, very nearly; for without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, it lays down the rule of judgment according to which God will deal with the children of men in determining them to their everlasting state; and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down *Gen. iv. 7.* If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? but, if not, sin, the punishment of sin, lies at the door. Here is, (1.) The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to this message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them, ver. 1—3. (2.) The reply given to this proverb, in which God asserts in general his own sovereignty and justice, ver. 4. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, ver. 4—20. But say to the righteous, it shall be well with them, ver. 5—9. In particular, as to the case complained of, he assures us, (1.) That it shall be ill with a wicked man though he had a good father, ver. 10—13. (2.) That it shall be well with a good man though he had a wicked father, ver. 14—18. And therefore in this God is righteous, ver. 19, 20. (3.) That it shall be well with penitents, though they began never so ill, ver. 21—23. and again, ver. 27, 28. (4.) That it shall be ill with apostates, though they began never so well, ver. 24—26. And the use of all this is, (1.) To justify God and clear the equity of all his proceedings, ver. 25—29. (2.) To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins and turn to God, ver. 30—32. And these are things which belong to our everlasting peace: O that we may understand and regard them before they be hid from our eyes!

1. THE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 3. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5. ¶ But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6. And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, 7. And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 8. He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

Evil manners we say beget good laws, and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

1. An evil proverb commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We

had one before, chap. xii. 22. and a reply to it; here we have another, that sets God's justice at defiance, *The days are prolonged and every vision faileth.* The threatenings are a jest. This chargeth him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a wrong: you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, now it is laid waste by the judgments of God, saying, *The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,* i. e. we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine regimen, as if the children should have their teeth set on edge or stupified by the fathers eating four grapes, whereas in the order of natural causes if men eat or drink any thing amiss they only themselves shall suffer by it. Now, (1.) It must be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evils of sin, of that sin, his detestation of it and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, and that parents might be restrained from sin by their affection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh and other preceding kings, for looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages, was but like making a man when he is old to puff off the iniquities of his youth, *Job xiii. 26.* And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But, (2.) They intended it as a reflection upon God, and an impeachment of his equity in his proceedings against them. Thus far that is right which is implied in this proverbial saying, That they who are guilty of wilful sin eat four grapes, they do that which they will feel from sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge; when conscience is awake, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge. But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the father's folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how wicked the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how witty it is, and how fly the comparison. Many that are impious in their jeers are ingenious in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used, they had it up ever and anon. And though it had plainly a blasphemous meaning, yet they sheltered themselves under the similitude from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears they were unhumbled under the rod, for instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but woe to him that thus strives with his Maker.

2. A just reproof of and reply to this proverb, What mean ye to use it? This is the reproof; do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or can you think any other but that you will hereby provoke him to be angry with you till he has consumed you? Is this the way to reconcile yourselves to him, and make your peace with him? The reply follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn, ver. 3. *Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb;* or, as it may be read, *ye shall not have the use of this parable.* The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, *Jer. xxxi. 29.* Here it is made the matter of a threatening, there it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case, *Jer. xxiii. 34—36.* God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with. Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbours shall confirm it, that you yourselves have eaten the same four grapes that your fathers eat before you, or else your teeth had not been set on edge.

1. That really the saying itself was unjust, and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For, (1.) God doth not punish the children for the father's sins, unless they tread in their steps and fill up the measure of their iniquity, *Math. xxiii. 32.* and then they have no reason to complain, for whatever they suffer it is less than their own sin has deserved. And when God speaks of visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, that is so far from putting any hardship upon children, to whom he only renders according to their works, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish presently, because he lays up their iniquity for their children, *Job xxi. 19.* (2.) It is only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents wickedness, and God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them; but as to spiritual and eternal misery, (and that is the death here spoken of) the children shall by no means smart for the parents' sins. This is here shewed at large; and it is a wonderful piece of condescension that the great God is pleased to reason the case with such wicked and unreasonable men, that he did not immediately strike them dumb or dead, but vouchsafed to state the matter before them that he may be clear when he is judged. Now in his reply,

1. He asserts and maintains his absolute and incontestible sovereignty; behold, all souls are mine, ver. 4. God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another; (1.) Souls are his. He that is the Maker of all things is in a particular manner the Father of spirits, for his image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in their creation, it is so in their renovation. He formeth the spirit of man within him, and is therefore called the God of the spirits of all flesh, of embodied spirits. (2.) All souls are his, all created by him and for him and accountable to him. As the soul of the father so the soul of the son is mine. Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh, our souls are not theirs, God challengeth them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter, (1.) That it is certain God may do what he pleaseth both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him what dost thou? He that gave us our being doth us no wrong if he take it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with him, as for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? (2.) That it is as certain God bears a good will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either; we are sure God hateth nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adults who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for all souls that none die but through their own default. All souls are his, and therefore he is not partial in his judgment of them. Let us subscribe to his interest in us and dominion over us; he saith, all souls are mine; let us answer, Lord, my soul is thine, I devote it to thee to be employed for thee,

thee, and made happy in thee. It is with good reason that God saith, *My son, give me thy heart, for it is my own; to which we must yield, Father, take my heart, it is thy own.*

2. Though God might justify himself by insisting upon his sovereignty, yet he waves that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment, by which he will proceed as to particular persons; and it is this.

1. The sinner that persists in sin shall certainly die, his iniquity shall be his ruin. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul, the body is but the instrument of unrighteousness, it is called the *sin of the soul*, Micah vi. 7. And therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and anguish of the soul, Rom ii. 9.

2. The righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness shall certainly live. *If a man be just, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and as an evidence of that do judgment and justice*, ver. 5. *he shall surely live, saith the Lord God*, ver. 9. He that makes conscience of conforming himself in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God, and his aim to glorify God, he shall without fail be happy here and for ever in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him, through a Mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this just man.

1. He is careful to keep himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil, (1.) From sins against the second commandment. In the matters of God's worship he is jealous, for he knows God is so. He hath not only not sacrificed in the high places to the images there set up, but he has not so much as eaten upon the mountains, i. e. not had any communion with idolaters by eating things sacrificed to idols, 1 Cor. x. 20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not sit with them at their tables in their high places. He detests not only the idols of the heathen but the idols of the house of Israel, which were not only allowed of but generally applauded and adored by those that were accounted the professing people of God. He has not only not worshipped those idols, but he hath not so much as lifted up his eyes to them; he has not given them a favourable look, has had no regard at all to them, neither desired their favour nor dreaded their frowns. He has observed so many bewitched by them that he has not dared so much as to look at them lest he should be taken in the snare. *The eyes of idolaters are said to go a whoring*, Ezek. vi. 9. See Deut. iv. 19.

(2.) From sins against the seventh commandment. He is careful to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness; and therefore he has not dared to defile his neighbour's wife, nor laid or done any thing which had the least tendency to corrupt or debauch her, nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when she is put apart for her uncleanness, for it was forbidden by the law, Lev. xviii. 19—xx. 18. Note, It is an essential branch of wisdom and justice to keep the appetite of the body always in subjection to reason and virtue.

(3.) From sins against the eighth commandment. He is a just man that hath not by fraud or under colour of law and right oppressed any, and that hath not with force and arms spoiled any by violence; not spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, ver. 7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world that brought the deluge, and the sins of which still God is and will be the avenger. Nay, he is one that has not lent his money upon usury, nor taken increase, ver. 8. though being done by contract it may seem free from injustice, *Volenti non fit injuria*, yet as far as it is forbidden by the law he dares not do it. A moderate usury they were allowed to receive from strangers, but not from their brethren. A just man will not take advantage of his neighbour's necessity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himself in ease and idleness, to live upon the sweat and toil of others: and therefore will not take increase from those who cannot make increase of what he lends them; nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from those that by the act of God are disabled to pay it; but is willing to share in loss as well as profit; *Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet & onus*.

2. He makes conscience of doing the duties of his place. He hath restored the pledge to the poor debtor, according to the law, Exod. xxii. 26. *If thou take thy neighbour's raiment for a pawn, the raiment that is for necessary use, thou shalt deliver it to him again that he may sleep in his own bed-clothes*. Nay, he has not only restored to the poor that which was their own, but has given his bread to the hungry; observe, it is called his bread because it is honestly come by; that which is given to some is not unjustly taken from others; for God hath said, *I hate robbery for burnt-offerings*. Worldly men insist upon it, that their bread is their own, as Nabal, who therefore would not give of it to David, 1 Sam. xxv. 17. yet let them know it is not so their own but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are necessary as well as food, and therefore this just man is so charitable as to cover the naked also with a garment, ver. 7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were produced as witnesses of her charity, Acts ix. 39. This just man has withdrawn his hands from iniquity, ver. 8. if at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency to that which afterwards has appeared to him to be an ill thing, he doth not persist in it, because he has begun it, but withdrawn his hand from that which he now perceives to be iniquity; for he executes true judgment between man and man, according as his opportunity is of doing it; as a judge, as a witness, as a jurymen, as a referee, and in all commerce is concerned that justice be done, that no man be wronged, that he that is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own, and is ready to interpose himself and do any good office in order hereunto. This is his character towards his neighbour, yet it will not suffice that he be just and true to his brother, to complete his character he must be so to his God likewise, ver. 9. *He hath walked in my statutes*, those which relate to the duties of his immediate worship, he hath kept those and all other his judgments, has had respect to them all, has made it his constant care and endeavour, to conform and come up to them all, to deal truly, i. e. that so he may approve himself faithful to his covenant with God, that having joined himself to God doth not treacherously depart from him, or dissemble with him; this is a just man, and living he shall live; he shall certainly live, shall have life, and shall have it more abundantly; shall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. *Keep the commandments, and thou shalt enter into life*, Matth. xix. 17.

10. ¶ If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of those things, 11. And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, 12. Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13. Hath given forth upon usury, and

hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. 14. ¶ Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, 15. That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, 16. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17. That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that, which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19. ¶ Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? when the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God by the prophet having laid down the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to them that patiently continue in well-doing, but indignation and wrath to them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (Rom. ii. 7, 8.) comes in these verses to shew that men's parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

1. He applies it largely, and particularly both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shews,

(1.) That a wicked man shall certainly perish in his iniquity, though he was the son of a pious father. If that righteous man before described beget a son, whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. (1.) It is supposed as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, the prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. He is here supposed to allow himself in all these enormities, which his good father dreaded, and carefully avoided; and to shake off all those good duties which his father made conscience of, and took satisfaction in, undoes all that his father did, and goes counter to his example in every thing. He is here described to be a highwayman, a robber, and a shedder of blood; an idolater, he hath eaten upon the mountains, ver. 11. and has lifted up his eyes to the idols, which his good father never did, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolaters, but to sacrifice with them, which is here called committing abomination, for the way of sin is down-hill. He is an adulterer, hath defiled his neighbour's wife; an oppressor even of the poor and needy, he robs the spial, and squeezeth those who he knows cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak, and impoverishing those that are poor already. He takes away from those to whom he should give. He hath spoiled by violence, and open force, he hath given forth upon usury, and so spoiled by contract; and hath not restored the pledge, but unjustly detained it, even when the debt was paid. Let those good parents that have wicked children not look upon their case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we see that grace doth not run in a blood, nor always attend the means of grace; nor is the race always to the swift, or the battle to the strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well, but God will let us know that his grace is his own, and his Spirit a free agent; and that though we are tied to give our children a good education, he is not tied to bless it. In this as much as any thing appears the power of original sin, and the necessity of special grace. (2.) We are here assured that this wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper a while in the world for the sake of the piety of his ancestors, but having committed all these abominations, and never repented of them, he shall not live, he shall not be happy in the favour of God, though he may escape the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of God, he shall surely die, he shall be for ever miserable; his blood shall be upon him, he may thank himself, he is his own destroyer; and his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead, that it will aggravate his sin and his condemnation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay it made him really the more vile and profligate, and consequently will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

(2.) That a righteous man shall be certainly happy, though he is the son of a wicked father. Though the father did eat the sour grapes, if the children do not meddle with them, they shall fare never the worse for that. Here,

1. It is supposed, and blessed be God it is sometimes a case in fact, that the son of an ungodly father may be godly; that observing how fatal his father's errors were, he may be so wise as to take warning, and not tread in his father's steps, ver. 14. Ordinarily children partake of the parents temper, and are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son, instead of seeing his father's sins, and, as is usual, doing the like, sees them and dreads doing the like. Men indeed do not gather grapes of thorns, but God sometimes doth; takes a branch from a wild olive, and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who sees all his father's sins which he hath done, and though he will not like Ham proclaim his father's shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loaths it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father. He considereth, and doth not such like; considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what an offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family, and therefore he doth not such like. Note, If we did but duly consider the ways of wicked men, we would all dread being

associates with them and followers of them. The particulars are here again enumerated almost in the same words with that character given of the just man, *ver. 6, &c.* to shew how good men walk in the same spirit and in the same steps. The just man here when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and if we look we shall find some examples for our imitation, as well as others for our admonition. This just man cannot only say as the Pharisee, *I am no adulterer, no extortioner, no oppressor, no usurer, no idolater*; but he hath given his bread to the hungry, and covered the naked; he hath taken off his hand from the poor; where he found his father had put hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours, he eased their burden; did not say what my father has done I will abide by, and if it was a fault it was his, and not mine, as Rehoboam who contemned the taxes his father had imposed; no, he takes his hand off from the poor, and restores them to their rights and liberties again, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* Thus he hath executed God's judgments, and walked in his statutes, not only done his duty for once, but gone on in a course and way of obedience.

2. We are assured that the graceless father alone shall die in his iniquity, but his gracious son shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father, *ver. 18.* because he was a cruel oppressor and did hurt, nay, because though he had wealth and power, he did not with it do good among his people; lo, even he, as great as he is, shall die in his iniquity, and be undone for ever; but he that kept his integrity shall surely live; shall be easy and happy, and he shall not die for the iniquity of his father. Perhaps his father's wickedness had lessened his estate, and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejudice at all to his acceptance with God and his eternal welfare.

2. He appeals to themselves then whether they did not wrong God with their proverb. Thus plain the case is, and yet ye say, *Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?* No, he doth not; he shall not if he will himself do that which is lawful and right, *ver. 19.* But this people that bare the iniquity of their fathers had not done that which is lawful and right, and therefore justly suffered for their own sin, and had no reason to complain of God's proceedings against them as at all unjust, though they had reason to complain of the ill example their fathers had left them as very unkind; *Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquity, Lam. v. 7.* It is true that there is a curse entailed upon wicked families, but it is as true that the entail may be cut off by repentance and reformation, let the impenitent and unreformed therefore thank themselves if they fall under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore repeated, *ver. 20.* The soul that sinneth it shall die, and not another for it. What direction God hath given to earthly judges, *Deut. xxiv. 16.* he will himself pursue; *The son shall not die, nor die eternally, for the iniquity of the father, if he do not tread in the steps of it, nor the father for the iniquity of the son, if he endeavour to do his duty for the preventing of it. In the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, which is now clouded and eclipsed, the righteousness of the righteous shall appear before all the world, to be upon him to his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a robe, upon him as a crown; and the wickedness of the wicked upon him, to his everlasting confusion, upon him as a chain, upon him as a load, as a mountain of lead to sink him to the bottomless pit.*

21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways and live? 24. ¶ But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespasses that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25. ¶ Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. 27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is further demonstrated the equity of his government; the former shewed that God will reward or punish according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better or for the worse; here he shews that he will regard or punish according to the change made in the person himself, whether for the better or the worse. While we are in this world we are in a state of probation, the time of trial lasts as long as the time of life, and according as we are found at last, it will be with us to eternity. Now see here,

1. The case fairly stated, much as it had been before, *chap. iii. 18, &c.* and here it is laid down once, *ver. 21—24.* and again, *ver. 26—29.* because it is a matter of vast importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

1. A fair invitation given to wicked people to turn from their wickedness. Assurance is here given us, that if the wicked will turn, he shall surely live, *ver. 21—27.*

Observe, (1.) What is required to denominate a man a true convert; how he must be qualified that he may be intitled to this act of indemnity. (1.) The first step towards conversion is consideration, *ver. 28.* Because he considereth and turneth. The reason why sinners go in their evil ways is, because they do not consider what will be in the end thereof; but if the pro-

digal once come to himself, if he sit down and consider a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be bettered, he will soon return to his father, *Luke xv. 17.* and the adulteress to her first husband, when she considers that then it was better with her than now, *Hos. ii. 7.* (2.) This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considereth he must turn away from his wickedness, that notes a change in the heart and in the disposition of that; he must turn from his sins and his transgressions, that notes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and wherein he has done iniquity must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin; *What have I to do any more with idols?* (3.) This aversion to sin must be universal; he must turn from all his sins and all his transgressions, without a reserve for any Delilah, any house of Rimmon; we do not rightly turn from sin, unless we truly hate it, and we do not truly hate sin as sin, if we do not hate all sin. (4.) This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty; he must keep all God's statutes, (for the obedience, if it be sincere, will be universal) and must do that which is lawful and right, which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must take for his rule, and not the will of the flesh, and the way of the world.

(2.) What is promised to those that do thus turn from sin to God. (1.) They shall give their souls alive, *ver. 27.* They shall surely live, they shall not die, *ver. 21.* and again, *ver. 28.* whereas it was said, *The soul that sins it shall die,* yet let not those that have sinned despair but that the threatened death may be prevented if they will but turn and repent in time. When David penitently acknowledgeth, *I have sinned,* he is immediately assured of his pardon, *The Lord hath taken away the sin, thou shalt not die,* *2 Sam. xii. 13.* thou shalt not die eternally. He shall surely live, i. e. he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under his wrath, which is as messengers of death to the soul. (2.) The sins they have repented of and forsaken shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them. *All his transgressions that he has committed,* though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redounding very much to his dishonour, yet they shall not be mentioned unto him, *ver. 22:* not mentioned against him; not only they shall not be imputed to him to ruin him, but in the great day they shall not be remembered against him to grieve or shame him; they shall be covered, shall be sought for and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy: when sin is forgiven it is blotted out, it is remembered no more. (3.) In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were the purchase of their pardon and bliss, and an atonement for their sins; but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

(3.) What encouragement a repenting returning sinner hath to hope for pardon and life according to this promise. He is conscious to himself that his obedience for the future can never be a valuable compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight, is to have mercy and to forgive, for he hath said, *ver. 23.* Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die? no, by no means, you never had any cause given you to think so. It is true, that God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it, and pursuant to that impenitent sinners will lie for ever under his wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight; though the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* It is spoken here comparatively; he hath not pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should turn from their ways and live; he is better pleased when his mercy is glorified in their salvation, than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A fair warning given to righteous people, not to turn from their righteousness, *ver. 24—26.* Here is, (1.) The character of an apostate, that turns away from his righteousness: he never was in sincerity a righteous man, as appears by that of the apostle, *1 John ii. 19.* If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but he passed for a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one, but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so turns away from his righteousness as one sick of it, and now shews, what he always had, a secret aversion to it: and having turned away from his righteousness, he commits iniquity, grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth; for when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, *Luke xi. 26.* (2.) The doom of an apostate; shall he live because he was once a righteous man? no, *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat.* In his trespasses, *ver. 24.* and for his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin) for the iniquity that he has done he shall die, shall die eternally, *ver. 26.* The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead, will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? no, *All his righteousness that he hath done,* though never so much applauded by men, shall not be mentioned so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a penitent is. Under the law, if a Nazarite were polluted, he lost all his foregoing days of his separation, *Numb. vi. 12.* so those that have begun in the spirit and end in the flesh, may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain, *Gal. iii. 3, 4.* unless we persevere we lose what we have gained, *2 John 8.*

2. An appeal to the consciences even of the house of Israel, though very corrupt, concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. (1.) The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, *ver. 25—29.* the house of Israel has the impudence to say, *The way of the Lord is not equal;* than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious: *He that formed the eye shall he not see?* Can his ways be unequal, whose will is the eternal rule of good and evil, right and wrong? *Shall not the judge of the earth do right?* no doubt he shall, he cannot do otherwise. (2.) God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemies God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have immediately vindicated the honour of his justice, by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of it; must those be suffered to draw another breath, that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again any where but in hell, that has once said, *The ways of the Lord are not equal?* Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to argue with them; and he requires them to own, for it is so plain that they cannot deny, (1.) The equity of his ways; *Are not my ways equal?* no doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners, and the afflictions of his own people, yea and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent the ways of the Lord are equal. (2.) The iniquity of their ways. *Are not your ways unequal?* It is plain they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads: God doth you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves. *The foolishness of man perverts his*

his way, makes that unequal, and then *his heart frets against the Lord*, as if his ways were unequal, *Prov. xix. 3.* In all our disputes with God, and in all controversies with us, it will be found that *his ways are equal*, but *our's are unequal*, that he is in the right, and we are in the wrong.

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. 31. ¶ Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

We have here the conclusion and application of the whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason, the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that *his ways are equal*; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*, but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his ways, yet he waits to be gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance, and a promise of pardon upon repentance.

1. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the same. (1.) We must *repent*; we must change our mind, and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss, and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can towards the undoing of it again. (2.) We must *turn ourselves from all our transgressions*, ver. 30. and again, ver. 32. *Turn yourselves*, face about; turn from sin, nay, turn against it as the enemy you loath, turn to God as the friend you love. (3.) We must *cast away from us all our transgressions*, we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again; give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it over-board as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul and crucify it, as a malefactor. (4.) We must *make us a new heart, and a new spirit*. This was the matter of a promise, chap. xi. 19. here it is the matter of a precept; we must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace: St. Austin well explains this precept; *Deus non jubet impossibilia, sed jubendo monet & facere quod possis, & petere quod non possis*. He hereby admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not.

2. Here are four good arguments used to enforce these calls to repentance. (1.) It is the only way, and it is a sure way to prevent the ruin which our sins have a direct tendency to. *So iniquity shall not be your ruin*, which implies, that if we do not repent, iniquity will be our ruin, here and for ever; but if we do, we are safe, we are snatched as brands out of the burning. (2.) If we repent not we certainly perish, and our blood will be upon our own heads. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* What an absurd thing it is for you to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. Note, The reason why sinners die is because they *will die*, they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered; herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are most unreasonable, and act most unaccountably. (3.) The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare, ver. 32. *I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth*, which implies that he has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent; which is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent. (4.) We are made for ever if we repent; *turn yourselves and live ye*. He that faith to us repent, thereby faith to us, live, yea, he faith to us, live; so that life and death are here set before us.

C H A P. XIX.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the xviii. to foretel and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah; in the calamitous exit of the four sons and grandsons of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament, ver. 1. And he doth it by similitudes. (1.) The kingdom of Judah and house of David is here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions, that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down and taken in nets, ver. 2—9. (2.) That kingdom and house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, that had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burnt, ver. 10—14. This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out their tranquillity.

1. **M**oreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2. And say, What is thy mother? a lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. 3. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. 4. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. 5. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. 6. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men. 7. And he knew their desolate places; and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. 8. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. 9. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that

his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

Here are, 1. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it is justly lamented by all that know what value to put upon the covenant of our God: as we find after a very large account of that covenant with David, *Psal. lxxxix. 3, 20, &c.* a sad lamentation for the decays and desolations of his family, ver. 38, 39. *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, hast made void the covenant of thy servant, and profaned his crown, &c.* The kings of Judah are here called *princes of Israel*; for their glory was diminished, and they were become but as *princes*; and their purity was lost, they were become corrupt and idolatrous as the *kings of Israel*, whose ways they had learned. The prophet must take up a lamentation for them; i. e. he must describe their lamentable fall, as one that did himself lay it to heart, and desired those he preached to and wrote to might do so too. And how can we expect others should be affected with that which we ourselves are not affected with? And ministers when they boldly foretell, yet must bitterly lament the destruction of sinners, as those that have not desired the *woeful day*. He is not directed to give advice to the princes of Israel, that had been long and often done in vain; but the decree being gone forth, he must take up a lamentation for them.

2. Instructions given him what to say.

1. He must compare the kingdom of Judah to a *lioness*; so wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it sat as a queen among the nations, ver. 2. *What is thy mother?* Thine, O king! We read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him, i. e. his people, *Cant. iii. 11.* Thine, O Judah? The royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a nursing mother. She is a *lioness*, fierce and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity they soon lost their humanity too; and when they feared not God, neither did they regard man. She lay down among lions; God had said the people shall dwell alone; but they mingled themselves with the nations, and learned their works; she nourished her whelps among young lions, taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then used by the arbitrary kings of the east, filled their heads betimes with notions of their absolute despotic power, and possessed them with a belief that they had right to enslave their subjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy: thus she nourished her whelps among young lions.

2. He must compare the kings of Judah to *lions whelps*, ver. 3. Jacob had compared Judah, and especially the house of David, to a *lion's whelp*, for its being strong and formidable to its enemies abroad, *Gen. xlix. 9.* *He is an old lion, who shall stir him up?* And if they had adhered to the divine law and promise, God had preserved to them the might and majesty, and dominion of a lion; and do h it in Christ, the *lion of the tribe of Judah*: but these *lions whelps* were so to their own subjects, were cruel and oppressive to them, preyed upon their estates and liberties; and when they thus by their tyranny made themselves a terror to those whom they ought to have protected, it was just with God to make those a terror to them, whom otherwise they might have subdued. Here is lamented, 1. The sin and fall of Jehoahaz, one of the whelps of this lioness. He became a young lion, ver. 3. he was made king, and though he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, covetousness, and revenge, as he had a mind, and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny, he learned to catch the prey and devoured men; when he got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing disoblighed him were made to feel his resentment, and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what came of it? He did not prosper long in his tyranny: the nations heard of him, ver. 4. heard how furiously he drove at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly. As a multitude of shepherds, is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey, *Ila. xxxi. 4.* And he was taken, as a beast of prey, in their pit. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their own liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and brought him in chains to the land of Egypt. Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

2. The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoiakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time expected the return of Jehoahaz out of Egypt, but at length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, ver. 5. And he instead of taking warning by his brother's fate, to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps; he went up and down among the lions, ver. 6. He consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men; and he soon learned to catch the prey, and he devoured men, ver. 6. he seized his subjects estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way: he had got the art of discovering what effects men had that lay concealed, and where the treasures were which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places, ver. 7. where they hid their money, and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to some place of safety; The land was desolate, and the country villages were deserted, and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the noise of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the forest to tremble, *Amos iii. 8.* and by his terrible roaring so astonished them, that they fell down for fear, and having not spirit to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He heftored and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin, ver. 8. The nations set against him on every side, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power, which they joined in confederacy to do for their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, 2 Kings xxiv 2. and he was taken in their pit. Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. They put this lion within grates, bound him in chains and brought him to the king of Babylon, ver. 9. What became of him we know not, but his voice was no where heard roaring upon the mountains of Israel: There was an end of his tyranny; he was buried with the burial of an ass, *Jer. xxii. 19.* though he had been as a lion, the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those that have terrified and enslaved others, are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those that by the abuse of their power to destruction, which was given them for edification, make themselves

as wild beasts, as roaring lions and ranging bears, for such Solomon faith wicked rulers are over the poor people, Prov. xxviii. 15. are treated as such; when those who like Ishmael have their hand against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

*Ad generum Cereris sine cæde & sanguine pauci
Descendunt reges & sicca morte tyranni.*

JUVENAL.

10. ¶ Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. 11. And she had strong rods for the scepters of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. 12. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east-wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them. 13. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. 14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a scepter to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Jerusalem the mother city is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, chap. xv.

1. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so; like a vine in thy blood, ver. 10, the blood royal; like a vine set in blood and watered with blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines, as if the blood which thou hast shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil; in such plenty was it shed; and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was fruitful and full of branches, by reason of the waters, the many waters, near which she was planted. Places of great wickedness may prosper for a while. And a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength. Or, poles for the support of this vine; for so magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity, that they were fit to make white staves of, for the scepters of them that bear rule, ver. 11. And they are strong rods only that are fit for scepters, men of strong judgments and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's stature was exalted among thick branches; when the government is in good able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak lowly vine, but, she appeared in her height, a topping city, with the multitude of her branches, *tantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi*. In thy quietness, so some read that ver. 10, which we translate in thy blood, thou wast such a vine as this; when Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

2. This vine is now quite destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, plucked it up in fury, ver. 12. ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was cut off close to the ground, though not plucked up by the roots, the east-wind dried up the fruit that was blasted, the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was pleasing, the prospect nothing that was promising. Her strong rods were broken and withered, her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed; the vine itself is planted in the wilderness, ver. 13. Babylon was as a wilderness to those of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah was as a wilderness to Jerusalem, now the whole country was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army; a fruitful land turned into barrenness. It is burnt with fire, Psalm lxxx. 16. and that fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, ver. 14. i. e. the king himself by rebelling against the king of Babylon has given occasion to all this mischief: she may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she has by her wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled, which devoured the fruit, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger: her fruit is burnt with her own branches, so that she has no strong rod to be a scepter to rule: none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take this ruin under their hand, as the complaint is, *Ihu. iii. 6, 7*. None of the house of David left that have right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has no strong rods for scepters. Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child, for as good have no rod, as not a strong rod. Those strong rods we have reason to fear had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in catching the prey, and devouring men, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, There shall be no strong rod to be a scepter to rule; but let men be as are the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. Note, This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation. The prophet was bidden ver. 1. to take up a lamentation, and having done so he leaves it to be made use of by others. It is a lamentation to us of this age, and the desolations continuing long, it shall be for a lamentation to those that shall come after us; the child unborn will rue the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing, but now they are come they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity. Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins are laying up in store for their children sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more so than the overthrow of government.

C H A P. XX.

In this chapter, (1.) The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel, ver. 1. (2.) He is instructed by his God what answer to give them. He must, (1.) Signify God's displeasure against them, ver. 2, 3. And (2.) He must show them what just cause he had for that displeasure;

by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings with God. (1.) In Egypt, ver. 1—9. (2.) In the wilderness, ver. 10—20. (3.) In Canaan, ver. 27—32. (3.) He must denounce the judgments of God against them, ver. 33—36. (4.) He must tell them likewise what mercy God hath in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again, ver. 37—44. (5.) Here is another word dropped towards Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 45—49.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the LORD, and sat before me. 2. Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to enquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. 4. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

Here is, 1. The occasion of this message which we have in this chapter. That sermon which we had chap. xviii. was occasioned by their presumptuous reflections upon God; this here was occasioned by their hypocritical enquiries after him. Each shall have their own. This prophecy is exactly dated in the seventh year of the captivity, about two years after Ezekiel began to prophesy. God would have them to keep count how long their captivity lasted, that they might see how the years went on towards their deliverance, though very slowly, certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the Lord, not statedly, as those chap. viii. 1. but, as it should seem, occasionally, and upon a particular emergency. Whether they were of those that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jerusalem upon business to Babylon, is not certain; but by what the prophet saith to them, ver. 32. it should seem their enquiry was, whether now they were captives in Babylon, at a distance from their own country, where they had not only no temple, but no synagogue for the worship of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters, to join with them in their worship, and do as the families of these countries do, that *serve wood and stone*. This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Naaman's indenting with Elisha, for leave to bow in the house of Rimmon, in compliment to the king; but we have reason to suspect that their enquiry drove at this. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened that ask God leave to go on in sin, and that when they are suffering for it. They came and sat very demurely and with a shew of devotion before the prophet, chap. xxxiii. 31.

2. The purport of this message.

1. They must be made to know, that God is angry with them; he takes it as an affront that they are come to enquire of him when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses. As I live saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you, ver. 3. Their shews of devotion shall neither be acceptable to God, nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their enquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, An hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances, is so far from being pleasing to him, that it is provoking.

2. They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them, ver. 4. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? Thou art a prophet, surely thou wilt not plead for them, as an intercessor with God; but surely thou wilt pass sentence on them, as a judge for God. See I have set thee over the nation, wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cause them therefore to know the abominations of their fathers; so the orders run now, as before, chap. xvi. 2. he must cause them to know their own abominations. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the abominations of their fathers; that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

5. ¶ And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God; 6. In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: 7. Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. 8. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 9. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so doth the history of man's apostacy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parents' creation, but we immediately meet with that of their rebellion; so we see here it was with Israel; a people designed to represent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God, and his with them. Here is,

1. The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bond slaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there, (1.) He chose Israel

to be a peculiar people to himself, though their condition was bad, and their character worse, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore chose them because they were *the seed of the house of Jacob*, the posterity of that prince with God, *that he might keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers*, Deut. vii. 7, 8. (2.) He made himself known to them, by his name Jehovah, a new name, *Exod. vi. 3.* when by reason of their servitude they had almost lost the knowledge of that name by which he was known to their fathers, God Almighty. Note, As the foundation of our blessedness is laid in God's choosing us, so the first step toward it is God's making himself known to us. And whatever distance we are at, whatever distress we are in, he that made himself known to Israel even in the land of Egypt, can find us out, and follow us with the gracious discoveries and manifestations of his favour. (3.) He made over himself to them as their God in covenant. *I lift up my hand unto them*, saying it, and confirming it with an oath, *I am the Lord your God*, to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliss. (4.) He promised to bring them out of Egypt, and made good what he promised. He *lifted up his hand*, i. e. he swore unto them that he would deliver them; and they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requisite the promise of it should be confirmed by an oath. Or, he *lifted up his hand*, i. e. he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an outstretched arm. Psal. cxxxvi. 12. (5.) He assured them that he would put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, *that he might bring them into the land that he had spied out for them*; a second garden of Eden, which was the glory of all lands; so he found it, the climate temperate, the soil fruitful, the situation pleasant, and every thing agreeable, Deut. viii. 7. and xi. 12. However, so he made it, by setting up his sanctuary in it.

2. The reasonable commands he gave them, and the easy conditions of his covenant with them at that time; having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what was all he expected from them; it was no more but this, *ver. 7. Cast ye away every man his images that he useth for worship*, that are the adorations, but should be the abominations of his eyes. Let him abominate them, and put them out of his sight, *and I will not yourselves with the idols of Egypt*, which it seems many of them were fond of; the golden calf was one of them. It was just, and what might reasonably be expected, that being delivered from the Egyptian slavery, they would quit the Egyptian idolatry; especially when God at bringing them out executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt, Num. xxxiii. 4. and thereby shewed himself above them. And whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they should have a rooted aversion to the gods of Egypt for Egypt's sake, which had been to them a house of bondage; Yet it seems they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reason, *I am the Lord your God*, who neither need an assistant, nor will admit a rival.

3. Their unreasonable disobedience to these commands, for which God might justly have cut them off as soon as ever they were formed into a people. *Ver. 8. They rebelled against God*; not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shook off their allegiance, and in effect told him they would be at liberty to worship what god they pleased; And even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not *forfake the idols of Egypt*; which perhaps made them speak so affectionately of the *onions of Egypt*, Num. xi. 5. for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion. It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the idols of Egypt. For this, God said he would *pour out his fury upon them*, even while they were yet in the *midst of the land of Egypt*. Justly might he have said, Let them die with the Egyptians. This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to work so great a salvation for them, even then when he saw them ripe for ruin: Well might Moses tell them, *It is not for your righteousness*, Deut. ix. 4, 5.

4. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them notwithstanding. Though they forfeited the favour while it was in the bestowing, and when God would have healed them, then their iniquity was discovered, *Hos. vii. 1. yet mercy rejoiced against judgment*, and God did what he designed, purely for his own name's sake, *ver. 9.* When nothing in us will furnish him with a reason for his favours, he furnisheth himself with one. God made himself known to them in the sight of the heathen, when he ordered Moses publicly to say to Pharaoh, *Israel is my son, my first-born*, let them go, *that they may serve me*. Now if he should have left them to perish for their wickedness as they deserved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be sanctified, and shall be so. Note, The church is secured, even when it is corrupt, because God will serve his own honour.

10. ¶ Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. 11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. 12. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. 13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 16. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. 17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. 18. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: 19. I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them; 20.

Vol. II. No. CXXXV.

And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. 21. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. 22. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. 23. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; 24. Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. 25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; 26. And I polluted them in their own gift, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that opened the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.

The history of the struggle between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavoured to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to save them and make them happy is here continued: And the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God honoured himself, and they shamed themselves. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament, 1 Cor. x. and Heb. iii. as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians; and therefore we are particularly concerned in these verses. Observe,

1. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to shew how ungrateful they had been. And we say, if you call a man ungrateful you can call him no worse. It was a great favour, (1.) That God brought them forth out of Egypt, *ver. 10.* Though as it follows, he brought them into the wilderness, and not into Canaan presently. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bond-slaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude, than to live both in a crowd; yet there were many of them who had such base servile spirits as not to understand this; but when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again. (2.) That he gave them the law upon mount Sinai, *ver. 11.* not only instructed them concerning good and evil, but by his authority bound them from the evil and to the good. He gave them his statutes, and a valuable gift it was: *Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel*, Deut. xxxiii. 4. God made them to know his judgments; not only enacted laws for them, but shewed them the reasonableness and equity of those laws; with what judgment they were formed. These laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey; for if a man do them he shall even live in them; i. e. in keeping of God's commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Christ saith, *If thou wilt enter into life, and enjoy it, keep the commandments*. Though they who are the most strict in their obedience are thus far unprofitable servants, that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recompensed; *This do, and thou shalt live*. The Chaldee saith, *He shall live an eternal life in them*. St. Paul quotes this, *Gal. iii. 12.* to shew that the law is not of faith, but propoeth life upon condition of perfect obedience; which we are not capable to perform, and therefore must have recourse to the grace of the gospel, without which we are all undone. (3.) That he revived the ancient institution of the sabbath-day, which was lost and forgotten while they were bond-slaves in Egypt: For their task-masters there would by no means allow them to rest one day in seven. In the wilderness indeed every day was a day of rest; for what need had they to labour who lived upon manna, and whose raiment waxed not old? but one day in seven must be a holy rest, *ver. 12. I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them*. The institution of the sabbath was a sign of God's good will to them, and their observance of it a sign of their regard to him; that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. By this God made it to appear he had distinguished them from the rest of the world, and designed to model them for a peculiar people to himself; and by their attendance on God in solemn assemblies of sabbath-days, they were made to increase in the knowledge of God, in an experimental knowledge of the powers and pleasures of his sanctifying grace. Note, 1. Sabbaths are privileges, and are so to be accounted: The church acknowledgeth it as a great favour, in that chapter which is parallel to this, and seems to have a reference to this, *Neh. ix. 14. Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbaths*. 2. Sabbaths are signs: it is a sign men have a sense of religion, and there is some good correspondence between them and God, while they make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath-day. 3. Sabbaths, if duly sanctified are the means of our sanctification: If we do the duty of the day, we shall find to our comfort, it is the Lord that sanctifies us; make us holy, that is, truly happy here, and prepares us to be happy, that is, perfectly holy hereafter.

2. Their disobedient undutiful carriage towards God, for which he might justly have thrown them out of covenant as soon as he had taken them into covenant, *ver. 13. they rebelled in the wilderness*. There where they received so much mercy from God, and had such a dependance upon him, and were in their way to Canaan, yet there they broke out in many open rebellions against the God that led them and fed them. They did not only not walk in God's statutes, but they despised his judgments as not worth observing; instead of sanctifying the sabbaths they polluted them; greatly polluted them, one gathered sticks, many went out to gather manna, on this day. Hereupon God was ready sometimes to cut them off; he said more than once he would consume them in the wilderness; but Moses interceded, so did God's own mercy more powerfully, and most of all a concern for his own glory, that his name might not be polluted and profaned among the heathen, *ver. 14.* that the Egyptians might not say, either for mischief he brought them thus far, or he was not able to bring them any further; or he had no such good land as was talked of to bring them to, *Exod. xxxii. 12. Numb. xiv. 13.* Note, God's strongest reasons for his sparing mercy are those which are fetched from his own glory.

3. God's determination to cut off that generation of them in the wilderness. He that lifted up his hand for them, *ver. 6.* now lifts up his hand against

against them; that they by an oath confirmed his promise to bring them out of Egypt, now by an oath confirmed his threatenings that he would not bring them into Canaan, ver. 15, 16. *I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, As truly as I live, these men which have tempted me these ten times, shall never see the land which I swore unto their fathers*, Num. xvi. 21. Psalm xcvi. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they put a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was a secret affection to the gods of Egypt; *their heart went after their idols*. Note, The bias of the mind towards the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness from which springs all disobedience to the divine law: The heart that goes after those idols despiseth God's judgments.

4. The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial and the instructions given to that seed, ver. 17. Though they thus deserved ruin and were doomed to it, yet *mine eye spared them*. When he looked upon them he had a compassion for them, and did not make an end of them, but reprieved them till a new generation was reared. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God that he has not long ago made an end of us. This new generation is well educated; Moses in Deuteronomy reported and enforced the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears afresh when they entered Canaan. Ver. 18. *I said unto their children in the wilderness, in the plains of Moab, walk in the statutes of your God, and walk not in the statutes of your fathers*; do not imitate their superstitious usages, nor retain their foolish wicked customs: Away with their vain conversation, which has nothing else to say for itself, but that it was received by the tradition of your fathers, 1 Pet. i. 18. *Defile not yourselves with your idols*, for you see how odious they rendered themselves to God by them. But keep my judgments, and hallow my sabbaths, ver. 19, 20. Note, If parents be careless, and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves when they grow up. And the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for admonition, and not for imitation.

5. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God. Ver. 21. *The children rebelled against me too*. And the same that was said of the father's rebellion is here said of the children, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them he knew their rebellion and their stiff-neck, Deut. xxxi. 27. And Deut. ix. 24. *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes*, ver. 21. Nay, *they despised my statutes*, ver. 25. They who disobey God's statutes despise them, they shew that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. They polluted God's sabbaths, as their fathers. Note, The profanation of the sabbath-day is an inlet to all impiety; those who pollute holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, ver. 16. that *their heart went after their idols*; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them: it is said of the children, ver. 24. that *their eyes went after their fathers idols*; they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped their fathers idols because they were their fathers, and they had them before their eyes; they were used to them: And if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage. And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that *if they had done them, they might have lived in them*, ver. 21. might have been a happy thriving people. Note, They had gone contrary to their duty, gone contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ that they may have life, John v. 40. And it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their disobedience, should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of that generation's rebellion and inclination to idolatry, was the *iniquity of Peor*, as that of their fathers was the *golden calf*, then the *anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*, Numb. xxv. 3. Then there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which, if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phineas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned in Joshua's time, we are not cleansed from that iniquity unto this day, Josh. xxii. 17. Psalm cvi. 29. Then it was that God said he would pour out his fury upon them, ver. 21. That he lifted up his hand unto them in the wilderness, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, that he would scatter them among the heathen. This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, Deut. xxxii. 20. Because they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, he said, *I will hide my face from them*; and ver. 26, 27. he said, *I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy*; which explains this here, ver. 21, 22. *I said I would pour out my fury upon them, but I withdrew my hand for my name's sake*: Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour, by making good this purpose, that while the world stands he will have a church in it.

6. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the statutes and judgments by which God prescribed them their duty, but despised them, and therefore God gave them statutes and judgments that were not good, and by which they should not live, ver. 25. By which seems to be meant the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness, the plague broke in upon them, the fiery serpent, and the like; which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called judgments, because inflicted by the justice of God, and statutes, because he gave orders concerning them; and commanded desolations, as sometimes he had commanded deliverances; and appointed Israel's plagues as he had done the plagues of Egypt. When God said *I will consume them in a moment*, Numb. xvi. 25. when he said, take the heads of the people and hand them up, Numb. xxv. 4. when he threatened them with the curse, and obliged them to say Amen to every curse, Deut. xxvii. and xxviii. then he gave them judgments by which they should not live; more is implied than is expressed, they are judgments by which they should die. Those that will not be bound by the precepts of the law, shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the word of God will take hold of men, Zech. i. 6.

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with; the statutes and judgments which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols were not good, and in practising them they could not live; and God gave them up to those; he made their sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a reprobate mind, as he did the Gentile idolaters, Rom. i. 24—26. Gave them up to their own hearts lusts, Psalm lxxxi. 12. Punished them for those superstitious customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to those that were against the very light and law of nature: He left them to themselves to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor; he polluted them, i. e. he permitted them to pollute themselves in their own gifts, ver. 26. And of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they caused their children, especially their first-born, (which God challenged a particular propriety in, *the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me*) to

pass through the fire, i. e. to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might make them desolate, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families, and a diminution of the honour and strength of their country. Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will run themselves and make themselves desolate. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a righteous God, which they themselves will be compelled to own, when they see how much their wilful transgressions contribute to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their judge when it is too late.

27. ¶ Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God: Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings. 29. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? and the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. 30. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31. For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. 32. And that which cometh into your mind, shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions for their further humiliation, and shews,

1. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, yet in this, i. e. in the very same thing, your fathers have blasphemed me, i. e. continued to affront me, that they also trespassed a trespass against me, ver. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them; This is blaspheming God, it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if they were of no significance and were not worth regarding.

(1.) God had made good his promise. *I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them*. Though their unbelief and disobedience had made the performance slow, and much retarded it, yet it did not make the promise of none effect. They were often very near being cut off in the wilderness, but a step between them and ruin, and yet they came to Canaan at last. Note, Even God's Israel gets to heaven by hell-gates; so many are their transgressions, and so strong their corruptions, that it is a miracle of mercy they are happy at last; as hypocrites go to hell by heaven-gates. *The righteous scarcely are saved—Per tot discrimina rerum tendimus ad cælum*.

(2.) They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry, that they might not be tempted to desert his sanctuary; but instead of defacing them they fell in love with them, and when they saw every high-hill whence they had the most delightful prospects, and all the thick trees where they had the most delightful shades, the former to shew forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their shameful ones; there they offered their sacrifices and made their sweet savour, which should have been presented upon God's altar only. There they presented the provocation of their offering, ver. 28. i. e. their offerings, which, instead of pacifying God or pleasing him, were highly provoking; sacrifices, which though costly, yet being misplaced were an abomination to the Lord.

(3.) They obstinately persisted therein notwithstanding all the admonitions that were given them, ver. 29. Then I told them, by my servants the prophets, told them where the high place was to which they went; nay, I put them upon considering it and asking their own consciences concerning it, by putting this question to them, *Which is the high place whereunto ye go?* What do you find there that is so inviting, that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent such places as he has forbidden to worship in? Do you not know that those high places are of a heathenish extraction, and that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils and not to God? Did not Moses tell you so? Deut. xxxii. 17. *And will you have fellowship with devils? What is that high place to which you go when you turn your back on God's altars? O foolish Israelites, who or what has bewitched you?* that you will forsake the fountain of life for broken cisterns, that worship which God appoints and will accept, for that which he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will avenge? And yet the name is called Bamah unto this day, i. e. they will have their way, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary: They are wedded to their high places; even in the best reigns those were not taken away; you could not prevail to take away the name of Bamah, the high place, out of their mouths, but still they would have that in the place of their worship. The sin and the sinner are hardly parted.

2. That this generation after they were unsettled continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclinations to idolatry, ver. 30. He must say to the present house of Israel, some of whose elders were now sitting before him, *Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?* After all that God hath said against you by a succession of prophets, and done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and commit the same abominations that they committed? I see you will; you have a mind to be at the old trade again; you offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire, either you actually do it or do it in purpose and imagination, and so you continue idolaters to this day. These elders seem now to have been projecting

projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reserve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell those who were forming this scheme, and were for compounding the matter between God and Baal, that they should have no comfort or benefit by either. (1.) They should have no benefit by their *consulting in private* with the prophets of the Lord; for because they were hearkening after idols God would have nothing to do with them. *Ver. 31. As I live, faith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you*; what he had said before, *ver. 3.* having largely shewed how just it was, he here repeats, as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their enquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, Those reap no benefit by their religion that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship, unless we be inward and upright with him therein. We make nothing of our profession if it be but a profession. Nay, (2.) They should have no benefit by their *conforming in public* to the practice of their neighbours. *Ver. 32. That which comes into your mind as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves to abuses, it shall not be at all, it shall turn to no account to you.* You say, *We will be as the heathen*, we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but *wood and stone*, and then we should be taken *as the families of the countries*, they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own countrymen. Tell them, faith God, that this project shall *never prosper*. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or if they do will think never the better but the worse of them for it, and will look upon them as dissemblers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours. Note, There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites, will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men and commend them to God and man.

33. ¶ *As I live, faith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you.* 34. *And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.* 35. *And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.* 36. *Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, faith the Lord GOD.* 37. *And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.* 38. *And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.* 39. *As for you, O house of Israel, thus faith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.* 40. *For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, faith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.* 41. *I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered: and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.* 42. *And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I have lifted up my hand to give it to your fathers.* 43. *And there shall he remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.* 44. *And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel faith the Lord GOD.*

The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was, that the people of Israel being scattered among the nations should *lay aside* all their peculiarities, and *conform* to those among whom they lived; but God had told them the design should not take effect, *ver. 32.* Now in these verses he shews particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the *mingling* of the families of Israel with the families of the countries: But it will prove in the issue,

1. That the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity, but shall be distinguished from them for destruction: for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostates from God, shall be sooner or sooner punished than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the way of righteousness: Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them; it is backed with an oath not to be reversed, *As I live, faith the Lord God*, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by halting between two: but God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

2. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection, and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel's king of old, and had they continued his loyal subjects he would

have ruled over them with care and tenderness for their good, but now with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out will I rule over them, *ver. 33.* That power which should have been exerted for their protection shall be exerted for their destruction. Note, There is no shaking off God's dominion, rule he will either with the golden scepter or with the iron rod; and they that yield to the power of his grace, shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen, among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for, *ver. 34. I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered*, as when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have escaped the sword of war are pursued and brought together out of all the places whither they were scattered, to be punished by the sword of justice. They shall be brought into the wilderness of the people, *ver. 35.* either into Babylon, which is called a wilderness, chap. xix. 13. and the desert of the sea, Isa. xxi. 1. or into some place, which, though full of people, shall be to them as the wilderness was to Israel after they came out of Egypt, a place where God will plead with them face to face, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt, *ver. 36.* where their carcasses shall fall, and where he will swear concerning them, that they shall never return to Canaan, as he swore concerning their fathers, that they should never come into Canaan; where he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai. Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will not only find time, but find a proper place too to plead with them in upon that action, a wilderness even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

2. Israel shall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor shall their relation to God's people stand them in any more stead for the other world, than their compliance with idolaters shall for this world; nor shall they stand in the congregation of the righteous any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a distinguishing day, when God will separate between the precious and the vile; he will cause them, as the shepherd causeth his sheep, to pass under the rod, when he tithes them, *Lev. xxvii. 32.* that he may mark which is for God. God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as sheep are counted, and he will bring them into the bond of the covenant, *ver. 37. i. e.* he will try them, and judge of them according to the tenor of the covenant, and the difference made between some and others by the blessings and the curses of the covenant. Or it may refer to those among them that repented and reformed, he will cause them to pass under the rod of affliction, and having done them good by it, he will bring them again into the bond of the covenant, will be to them a God in covenant, and use them again as heirs of promise.

3. He will separate the wicked from among them: *ver. 38. I will purge out from among you the rebels*, that have been a grief and scandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all these calamities upon you; the judgments of God that find them out, and their naming the name of Israel that is no shelter to them. They shall be brought out of the country where they sojourn, and shall not have that rest in them which they promised themselves. But they shall not enter into the land of Israel, nor enjoy the benefit of that rest which God has promised to his people. Note, Though godly people may share with wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people shall have no share with the godly in the heavenly Canaan: but it shall be part of the blessedness of that world, that they shall be purged out from among them, the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the corn, chap. xiii. 9. But wherever these idolaters of the house of Israel were contriving to worship both God and their idols, thinking to please both, God here protests against it, *ver. 39. As Jah had done in his name, If the Lord be God, then follow him, but if Baal, then follow him*; if you will serve your idols do, and take what comes of it; but then do not pretend relation to God, and a religious observance of him, nor pollute his holy name with your gifts at his altar. Spiritual judgments are the forest judgments: two of that kind of judgments are threatened in this verse against those that were for dividing between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations. (1.) That they should be given up to the service of their idols: to them he saith ironically, *Since ye will not hearken unto me, Go ye, serve every one his idols.* now you think it will be for your interest, and hereafter also. You shall go on in it, Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, let him take his course, and see what he will get by it at last. Note, They who think to serve themselves by sin, will find in the end that they have but enslaved themselves to sin. (2.) That they should be cut off from the service of God, and communion with God; you shall not pollute my holy name with your vain oblations, Isa. i. 11. You bring your gifts in your hands, wherewith you pretend to honour me, but at the same time you bring your idols in your hearts, and therefore you do but pollute me; which I will not suffer any more, *Amos v. 22.* Note, Those are justly forbidden God's house that profane his house.

4. He will separate them to himself again. (1.) He will gather them in mercy out of the countries whither they were scattered, to be monuments of mercy, as the incorrigible were gathered to be vessels of wrath, *ver. 41.* Not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world. (2.) He will bring them to the land of Israel, which he had promised to give to their fathers; and the discontinuance of their possession shall be no denatance of their right; it is the land of Israel still, and thither God will bring them safe again, *ver. 42.* (3.) He will re-establish his ordinances among them, will let up his sanctuary in his holy mountain, which is here called the mountain of the height of Israel, for the mount Zion was none of the highest mountains, yet the temple there was one of the highest honours of Israel. It is promised, that they who preserved their integrity, and would not serve idols in other lands, shall return to their prosperity and shall serve the true God in their own land. *All of them in the land shall serve me.* Note, It is the true happiness of a people, and a sure token for good to them, when there is a prevailing disposition in them to serve God. Whereas God had forbidden the idolaters to bring their gifts to his altar, of these he will require offerings and first-fruits, and will accept them, *ver. 40.* What he doth not require he will not accept, but what is done with a regard to his precepts he will be well pleased with. He will accept them with their sweet savour, or savour of rest, *ver. 41.* as being very grateful to him, and what he takes a complacency in; whereas to hypocritical worshippers he saith, *I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.* (4.) He will give them true repentance for their sins, *ver. 43.* When they find how gracious God is to them, they will be overcome with his kindness, and blith to think of their ill carriage towards good a God. There, in my holy mountain, when you come to enjoy the privileges of that again, there shall ye remember your doings, wherein ye have been defiled. Note, The more conversant we are with God's holiness, the more we shall see of the odious nature of sin. There ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight. Note, Ingenious evangelical repentance makes people lothe themselves for their sins, as *Jab xlii. 5, 6.* (5.) He will give them the knowledge of himself: *They shall know by experience, that he is the Lord*; that he is a God of almighty power and inexhaustible goodness; kind to his people and faithful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God should lead us into a more intimate acquaintance with him. (6.) He will do

do all this for his own name's sake, notwithstanding their undeservings and ill-deservings, ver. 44. He has wrought with them; i. e. wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour, he has wrought with them purely for his name's sake. His reasons were all fetched from himself; had he dealt with them according to their wicked ways, and corrupt doings, though they were the better and sounder part of the house of Israel, he had left them to be scattered and lost with the rest: but he recovered and restored them for the sake of his own name, not only that it might not be polluted, ver. 14, but that he might be sanctified in them before the heathen, ver. 41. that he might sanctify himself, so the word is; for it is God's work to glorify his own name. He will do well for his people, that he may have the glory of it; that he may manifest himself to be a God pardoning sin, and so keeping promise; that his people may praise him, and that their neighbours may likewise take notice of him, as they did when God turned against their captivity, Psalm cxxvi. 3. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.

45. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 46. Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; 47. And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree; the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. 48. And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched. 49. Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

We have here a prophecy of wrath against Judah and Jerusalem, which should more fully have begun the next chapter, than have concluded this; for it has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the reddition or explication of it, when the people complained, that this was a parable which they understood not. In this parable,

1. It is a forest that is prophesied against, the forest of the south-field, i. e. Judah and Jerusalem. These lay south from Babylon where Ezekiel now was, and there he is directed to set his face towards the south, ver. 46. to intimate to them, that God had set his face against them, was displeased with them, and determined to destroy them. But though it be a message of wrath he has to deliver, he must deliver it with mildness and tenderness, he must drop his word toward the south: his doctrine must distil as the rain, Deut. xxxii. 2. that people's hearts might be softened by it, as the earth by the river of God, which drops upon the pastures of the wilderness, Psalm lxxv. 12. and which a south land more especially calls for, Josh. xv. 19. Judah and Jerusalem are called forests, not only because they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but because they had been empty of fruit, for fruit-trees grow not in a forest; as a forest is put in opposition to a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. They that should have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, were become like a forest, all overgrown with briars and thorns; and those that are so, that bring not forth the fruits of righteousness, God's word prophesies against.

2. It is a fire kindled in his forest, that is prophesied of, ver. 47. All those judgments, which wasted and consumed both the city and the country, sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are signified by this fire. (1.) It is a fire of God's own kindling; I will kindle a fire in thee; the breath of the Lord is not as a drop, but as a stream of brimstone to set it on fire, Isa. xxx. 33. He that had been himself a protecting fire about Jerusalem, is now a consuming fire in it. All flesh shall see by the fury of this fire, and the desolations it shall make, especially when they compare it with the sins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is the Lord that has kindled it, ver. 48. as a just avenger of his own injured honour. (2.) The conflagration shall be general: all orders and degrees of men shall be devoured by it; young and old, rich, and poor, high and low; even green trees, which the fire doth not easily fasten upon, shall be devoured by this fire; even good people shall some of them be involved in these calamities: and if this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? The dry trees shall be as tinder and touch-wood to this fire. All faces, i. e. all that covers the face of the earth from the south of Canaan to the north, from Beersheba to Dan, shall be burnt therein. (3.) The fire shall not be quenched, no attempts to give check to the dissolution shall prevail. When God will ruin a nation, who or what can save it?

Now observe, 1. The people's reflection upon the prophet on occasion of this discourse. They said, Doth he not speak parables? Which was the language either of their ignorance or infidelity, the plainest truths were as parables to them; or of their malice and ill will to the prophet. Note, It is common for those, who will not be wrought upon by the word, to pick quarrels with it; it is either too plain, or too obscure; too fine, or too homely; too common, or too singular; something or other is amiss in it. (2.) The prophet's complaint to God. Ah, Lord God, they say so and so of me. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people speak ill of us unjustly, that we have a God to complain to.

C H A P. XXI.

In this chapter we have, 1. An explication of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the forest, which the people complained they could not understand, ver. 1—5. with direction to the prophet to shew himself deeply affected with it, ver. 6, 7. (2.) A further prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all should be laid waste: and this expressed very emphatically, ver. 8—17. (3.) A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach in Jerusalem, to which he was determined by divination, ver. 18—24. (4.) Sentence passed upon Zedekiah, king of Judah, ver. 25, 26, 27. (5.) The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold, ver. 28—32. Thus is this chapter all threatening.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. 3. And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out

of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. 4. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: 5. That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. 6. Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins: and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. 7. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it: but when he complained, that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that speaks with tongues should pray that he may interpret, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. When we speak to people about their souls, we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be best understood. Christ expounded his parables to his disciples, Mark iv. 34.

1. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy. He must drop his word toward the holy places, ver. 2. towards Canaan the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places, but when they polluted them, the word which used to drop in the holy places shall now drop against them. Prophecy against the land of Israel. It was the honour of Israel that it had prophets and prophecy, but these being despised by them are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed and is to instruct the people in the meaning of the fire that was threatened, to consume the forest of the south: it signified a sword drawn, the sword of war which should make the land desolate; ver. 3. Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel. There needs do more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us we need not fear whoever are against us, so if he be against us we cannot hope whoever are for us. And God's professing people when they revolt from him set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he hath prepared and which he will give commission to; it is he that will draw it out of its sheath, where it had lain quiet and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the nations God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour every green tree and every dry tree? The sword in like manner shall cut off the righteous and the wicked; good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation: the righteous were cut off from the land of Israel, when they were sent captives into Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel, that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it, and conveyed to Babylon. But though the sword cut off the righteous and the wicked, for it devours one as well as another, 2 Sam. xi. 25. yet far be it from us to think that the righteous are as the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. No, God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seems to make none. The good signs are sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, Eccles. ix. 2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel: well might it be said, his eye shall not spare, when it shall not spare, no not the righteous in it. Since there are not righteous men enow to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious, the few that are shall suffer with it, and God's mercy shall make it up to them some other way. Did the fire burn up all the faces from the south to the north? The sword shall go forth against all flesh from the south to the north; shall go forth as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire, they shall be made to know that he hath drawn forth the sword, ver. 5. And lastly, shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem, the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed; it shall not return any more till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message he must sigh, ver. 6. must fetch many deep sighs, with the breaking of his loins; he must sigh as if his heart would burst, sigh with bitterness, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly in the sight of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes, as that was to their ears, and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sigh, though it was painful to himself, and made his breast sore; and though it is probable the profane among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining, canting preacher. But if we be beside ourselves, it is to God, and if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they speak of, must shew that they are themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them; and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people observing the prophet to sigh so much, and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, Wherefore sighest thou? These sighs have some mystical meaning, let us know what it is; and he must answer them, ver. 7. it is for the tidings, the heavy tidings that we shall hear shortly; the tidings come, the judgments come which we hear the tidings of, it cometh apace; and then you will all sigh; nay, that will not serve, every heart shall melt, and every spirit fail; your courage will all be gone, and you will have no encouraging considerations to support yourselves with; and when heart and spirit fail it will follow of course, that all hands will be feeble and unable to fight, and all knees will be weak as water and unable to flee, or to stand their ground. Those who have God for them, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be the strength of their heart; but those who have God against them, have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Balthazar when his thoughts troubled him, Dan. v. 6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here,

here, and the event prove better than likely? No, *behold it cometh, and shall be brought to pass.* It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the *fearful is the wrath*, and more grievous than is feared.

8. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: 10. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree. 11. And he hath given it to be furbished, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. 12. Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel; terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh. 13. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord GOD. 14. Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. 15. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied; ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter. 16. Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. 17. I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it.

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the foregoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament.

Observe, 1. How the sword is here described. (1.) It is *sharpened* that it may cut and wound, and make a *sore slaughter*. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fit them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a *sharp sword*. Rev. xix. 15: (2.) It is *furbished* that it may glitter, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of *flaming sword*. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for a while, during this day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again and be made to glitter. (3.) It is a *victorious sword*, nothing shall stand before it, ver. 20. *it contemneth the rod of my son as every tree*. Israel, said God once, *is my son, my first-born*. The government of that people was called a *rod*, a *strong rod*; we read chap. xix. 11. of the *strong rods* they had for *sceptres*; but when the sword of God's justice is drawn, it contemneth this *rod*, makes nothing of it, though it be a *strong rod*, and the *rod of his son*, it is no more than *any other tree*. When God's professing people are revolted from him, and in rebellion against him, his sword *despisteth* them. What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword? *it is the rod of my son*; and we know of whom God hath said, *Psal. ii. 7. Thou art my son, This day have I begotten thee*, and ver. 9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*: this sword is that *rod of iron*, which contemneth every tree, and will bear it down. Or, this sword is the *rod of my son*, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people, 2 Sam. vii. 14, not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a *rod* to my son.

2. How the sword is here put into the hands of the executioners. It is the *rod of my son*, and he has given it that it may be handled, ver. 11. that it may be made use of for the end for which it was drawn. It is *given into the hand*, not of the fencer to be played with, but of the slayer to do execution with. The sword of war my son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him all judgment is committed. It is *made bright*, ver. 15 *it is wrapped up*, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp for the slaughter, not as Goliath's sword was wrapped up in a cloth, only for a memorial, 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

3. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is sent, ver. 12. *It shall be upon my people*; they shall fall by this sword; it is repeated again, as that which is scarce credible, that the sword of the heathen shall be upon God's own people. Nay, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel; their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security, than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have, while they carry themselves as becomes his people: but these had not done so, and therefore terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon those that call themselves my people. Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil, but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the terrors of it, arising from a consciousness of their own guilt. This sword is directed particularly against the great men, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds, Jer. v. 5. and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is, who had been the ring-leaders in sin. The sword of the slain is the sword of the great men that are slain, ver. 14. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will enter into their privy chambers and find them out there, as the frogs when they were one of Egypt's plagues found admission into the chambers of their kings. The sword, the point of this sword, is directed against their gates, against all their gates, ver. 15. against all those things with which they thought to keep it out and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be gates of brass, never so well barred, never so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is pointed against sinners, (1.) They are ready to fear the worst; their hearts faint, so that they are not able to make any resistance. (2.) The worst comes, whatever resistance they make it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and their ruins are multiplied. But what need we observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has a general commission, is sent

with a running warrant? ver. 16. *Go thee, one way or other*, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand, or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore whithersoever thy face is set, that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty, 2 Sam. i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people; that which way soever God's judgments go forth they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of meeting with sinners, that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first when it flamed in the hand of the cherubims, it turneth every way, Gen. iii. 24.

4. What is the nature of this sword, and what the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, ver. 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in the midst of these terrible ones; though it be expressed somewhat obscurely. (1.) The people of God begin to be afraid that the sword will contemn even the rod; that the sword will go on with such fury that it will despise its commission to be a rod only, will forget its bounds and become a sword indeed, even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldeans sword, which is the rod of God's anger, contemn its being called a rod, and become as the axe that boasts itself against him that heweth therewith; or the staff that lifts up itself as if it were no wood, Isa. x. 15. Or, what if the sword contemn even the rod, i. e. what if this sword make the former rods, as that of Sennacherib to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation? This is that which the thinking, but timorous, few are apprehensive of. Note, When threatening judgments are abroad, it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre? viz. that if Judah and the house of David, so some think Shebet here signifies: what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, the Lord is righteous and will be gracious notwithstanding. But, (2.) These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so; the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent: *It is a trial*, and it is no more than a trial. He that lends it makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it he pleaseth. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that whatever they are to others, to them they are but trials; and when they are tried they shall come forth as gold, and the proving of their faith shall be the improving of it.

5. Here the prophet and the people must shew themselves affected with these judgments threatened.

1. The prophet must be very serious in denouncing these judgments. He must say, *A sword, a sword*, ver. 9. Let him not study for fine words, and a variety of quaint expressions; when the town is on fire people do not so give notice of it, but cry with a frightful doleful voice, *fire, fire*. So must the prophet cry, *A sword, a sword*; and, ver. 14. *Let the sword be doubled the third time* in thy preaching. God speaketh once, yea twice, yea thrice, it were well if men after all would perceive and regard it; it shall be doubled the third time in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's third descent upon Jerusalem that made a full end of it. Ruin comes gradually, but at last comes effectually upon a provoking people. Yet this is not all; the prophet is not only as a herald at arms to proclaim war, and to cry, *A sword, a sword*, once and again, and a third time, but as a person nearly concerned he must cry and howl, ver. 12. must sadly lament the desolations that the sword would make, as one that did himself not only sympathize with the sufferers, but feel from the sufferings. Again, ver. 14. *Prophesy and smite thy hands together*, wring thy hands, as lamenting the desolation; or clap thy hands, as by thy prophecy intigating and encouraging those that were to be the instruments of it; or as one standing amazed at the suddenness and severity of the judgment. The prophet must smite his hands together; for (saith God) *I will also smite mine hands together*; ver. 17. God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence upon them, and therefore the prophet must shew himself in earnest in publishing it. God's smiting his hands together, as well as the prophet's, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedness, which was really very astonishing. When Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, he smote his hands together, Numb. xxiv. 10. Note, God and his ministers are justly angry at those who might be saved, and yet will be ruined. Some make it an expression of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that, *Isa. i. 24. Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*, and that, *Prov. i. 26. I also will laugh at their calamity*. And so it follows here, *I will cause my fury to rest*, not only it shall be perfected, but shall be pleased. And observe with what solemnity, with what authority this sentence is ratified, *I the Lord have said it*, who can and will make good what I have said. *I have said it* and will never unsay it. *I have said it*, and who can gainsay it?

2. The people must be very serious in the prospect of these judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parenthesis, ver. 10. *Should we then make mirth?* Seeing God hath drawn the sword, and the prophet sighs and cries, *should we then make mirth?* The prophet seems to give this as a reason why he sighs, as *Nehemiah ii. 3. Why should not my countenance be sad*, when Jerusalem lies waste? Note, Before we allow ourselves to be merry, we ought to consider whether we should be merry or no. Should we make mirth, we that are sentenced to the sword, that lie under the wrath and curse of God? Shall we make mirth at other people, who have gone a whoring from our God? *Hos. ix. 1. Should we now make mirth*, when the hand of God is gone out against us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land, and he by them calls to weeping and mourning, *Isa. xxii. 11—13. Shall we now make mirth* as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity? *Ester iii. 15. when we should be grieving for the affliction of Joseph*, Amos vi. 6.

18. ¶ The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 19. Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. 20. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defended. 21. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. 22. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint

appoint *battering rams* against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort. 23. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their fight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. 24. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, *I say*, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. 25. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have an end*, 26. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *shall not be the same*: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. 27. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

The prophet in the verses before had shewed them the sword coming, he here shews them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way.

1. He must see and shew the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem, and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must appoint him two ways, i. e. he must upon a paper draw out two roads, ver. 19. as sometimes is done in maps; and he must bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a stand. They both come out of the same land, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Raba the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first; here his politics and his politicians leave him at a loss: The sword must go either to Rabbah, or to *Judah in Jerusalem*. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called *Judah in Jerusalem the defended*; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, Lam. iv. 12. The prophet must describe this dilemma that the king of Babylon is at, ver. 20. For the king of Babylon stood, i. e. he shall stand considering what course to take, at the head of the two ways. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet it seems he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will, yet seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe, (1.) The method he took to come to a resolution; he used *divination*, applied himself to a higher and invisible power, either to the determination of providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright that were to be drawn for the lots of honour of the solemnity. Perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow, and Rabbah on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or to the direction of some pretended oracle, he consulted with images or *Teraphim*, expecting to receive audible answers from them: Or, to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices, he looked in the liver, whether the position of that portended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth, that in difficult cases they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an instance of their folly that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it; when in cases proper for an appeal to providence, it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, *Give a perfect lot*, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, Prov. xvi. 33. (2.) The resolution he was hereby brought to. Even by these ill practices God served his own purposes, and directed him to go to Jerusalem, ver. 22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which according to the rules of divination determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for, he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what conduct they are under. Well, Jerusalem being the mark set up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do, and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; *battering rams* must be prepared, and *forts built*. O what pains, what cost are men at to destroy one another!

2. He must shew both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1. The people do so, ver. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming: Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a *false divination*; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divinations is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprise, they laugh at it, and continue secure, calling it a *false divination*; because they have sworn oaths; i. e. they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise they have made them to raise the siege, or upon the assurances which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised. Or it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of theirs, God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the *fairest warnings* given them were slighted by them as *false divinations*. Note, Those who make a jest of the most sacred oaths, it is not strange if they can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles; for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them. (1.) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now God is contending with them, so perverse and obdurate are they, that whatever they offer in their own defence doth but add to their offence; they never carried themselves so ill as they did now they have the loudest call given them to repent and reform; so that in all your doings your sins do appear; turn you which way you will and you shew a black side: this is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but there is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not. Our best services have such allays of weakness and folly and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us, even when we would do good, that we may say with sorrow and shame, in all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were unnone. (2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness, you

have made your iniquity to be remembered, not by yourselves that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for. Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only that by the present discoveries of their wickedness shew that they do not repent of them. (3.) That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyer, that they may be taken, ver. 23. and ye shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape. Men are said to be God's hand, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, Psalm xvii. 14. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace, shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2. The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here in God's name addresseth himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?

1. He gives him his character, ver. 25. Thou profane and wicked prince of Israel? He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit this character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned and made Israel to sin. Note, Profaneness and wickedness is bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel; that as an Israelite should know better himself, and as a prince give a better example, and have a better influence on those about him.

2. He reads him his doom. His iniquity has an end, the measure of it is full, and therefore his day is come, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are wicked and profane may flourish a while, yet their day will come to fall. The sentence here passed is, (1.) That Zedekiah shall be deposed; he has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground, ver. 26. Remove the diadem. Crowns and diadems are lovable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fadeth not away; a kingdom that cannot be moved. The Chaldee paraphrase expounds it thus, Take away the diadem from Seraiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king, neither this nor that shall abide in his place; but shall be removed. This shall not be the same; not the same he has been; this not this, so the word is. Profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been, but not prince of Israel as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness removes their diadem, and takes off their crown, and makes them the reverse of what they were. (2.) That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in exalting him that is low, and abasing him that is high, preserving time and degrading others at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. (3.) Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted, and come to nothing: Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's who was of the seed-royal, to which the Chaldee paraphrase refers this, neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, first one project, and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down? (4.) This monarchy shall never be restored, till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah, There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, who is that seed of David in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and I will give it him. He shall have the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as king and prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestible title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And having the right he shall in due time have the possession, I will give it him; and there shall be a general overturning of all rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way to make room for him, Dan. ii. 45. 1 Cor. xv. 25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared the promise made in David would fail for evermore. No, saith God, that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever.

28. ¶ And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is furnished, to consume because of the glittering: 29. Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whole day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. 30. Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy. 32. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I the LORD have spoken it.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem; seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbah, when he turned it upon Jerusalem; upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance; the reprieve is not a pardon; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them, that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

1. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is their reproach, ver. 28. (1.) The reproach they put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such it seems there were among them, as well as among the Jews) that pretended to foretell their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them. They see vanity unto thee, and divine a lie, ver. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them. Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity, prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. (2.) The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their

their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines, by puffing them up with a conceit, that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent, that they did even tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their iniquity had an end, i. e. when the measure of it was full; we shall meet with this again; chap. xxv. 3. &c. Note, Those are ripening apace for misery, who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God.

2. The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, *Psal. lxxix. 12.* Let us see how terrible the threatening is, and the destruction will be. (1.) It shall come from the wrath of God; who reflects the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself, *ver. 31. I will pour out my indignation as a shower of fire and brimstone upon thee;* the least drop of divine indignation and wrath, will create tribulation and anguish enough to the soul of man that doth evil; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? *I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, i. e. I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee;* it shall burn with the utmost vehemence. And, *ver. 32. Thou shalt be fuel to this fire.* Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath, they are consumed by it, and it is enflamed by them. (2.) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow; *The sword; the sword is drawn, ver. 28. compare ver. 9. 10. it is drawn to consume because of the glittering, i. e. because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of.* God's executions will answer his preparations. This sword when it is drawn shall not return into its sheath, *ver. 30. till it has done the work for which it was drawn.* When the sword is drawn, it doth not return till God causeth it to return, and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? (3.) The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Men of such a bad character as this, that have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts; human reason which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy; though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes are made use of to serve God's purposes: *God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's Israel.* We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, *2 Thess. iii. 2.* men that seem made for doing mischief. (4.) The place where they should thus be reckoned with; *I will judge thee there where thou wast created,* where thou wast first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seemest to have taken root: *the land of thy nativity shall be the land of thy destruction.* Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are most secure; and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed, and a possession of not to be disturbed. *Thy blood shall be shed not only in thy borders, but in the midst of thy land.* Lastly, It shall be an irreparable ruin; though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it, thou shalt be no more remembered with any respect, *Psal. ix. 6.* Justly is their name blotted out who would have Israel's name for ever lost.

C H A P. XXII.

Here are three several messages which God intrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purpose, to shew them their sins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins. (1.) Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame, and for which God would bring them to ruin, *ver. 1—16.* (2.) They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire, *ver. 17—22.* (3.) All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of, *ver. 23—31.*

1. **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made: and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. 6. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. 7. In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow, 8. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. 10. In thee have they discovered their father's nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. 12. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. 13. ¶ Be-

hold, therefore, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it. 15. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. 16. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

In these verses the prophet by a commission from heaven is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar; and if prophets were set over other nations much more over God's nation, *Jer. i. 10.* This prophet is authorized to judge the bloody city; the city of blood; Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the particular sin of blood-shed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes, chap. vii. 23. such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them: These two things Ezekiel is to do here.

1. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is *billā vera*; so he writes upon it, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth. He must shew her all her abominations, *ver. 2.* that God may be justified in all the delations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceeding sinful.

1. Murder; the city sheds blood, not only in the suburbs where the strangers dwell, but in the midst of it, where one would think the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels, or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers, according to the law, *Gen. ix. 6.* no nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder, *Deut. xxi. 1.* and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, *ver. 4.* This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's measure filling sin more than any other; it is said to be that which the Lord would not pardon, *2 Kings xxiv. 4.* (1.) The princes of Israel, that should have been the protectors of injured innocence, every one were to their power to shed blood, *ver. 6.* They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none. (2.) There were those who carried tales to shed blood, *ver. 9.* They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or betrayed what passed in private conversation to make mischief among neighbours and set them together by the ears, to bite and devour, and worry one another even to death. Note, Those who by giving invidious characters, and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it doth. (3.) There were those who took gifts to shed blood, *ver. 12.* that would be hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or if they were upon a jury would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When so much barbarous bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem, we may well conclude, (1.) That men's consciences were become wretchedly profligate and seared, and their hearts hardened, for they would stick at no wickedness that would not stick at this. (2.) That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away, whereby as the guilt of the city was increased, so the number of those that should have stood in the gap to turn away the wrath of God was diminished.

2. Idolatry. She maketh idols against herself to destroy herself, *ver. 3.* And again, *ver. 4.* Thou hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves, and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience is defiled, so that to them nothing is pure. Those that did not make idols themselves, yet were found guilty of eating upon the mountains or high places, *ver. 9.* in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters.

3. Disobedience to parents, *ver. 7.* In thee have the children set light by their father and mother, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder, *1sa. iii. 5.* They that set light by their parents are in the highway to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Pharisees in their day taught children, under pretence of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents, and refuse to maintain them, *Matt. xv. 5.*

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves they wronged the poor, *ver. 7.* They dealt by oppression, and deceit with the stranger, taking advantage of his necessities, and his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, they vexed the fatherless and widows by unreasonable demands and inquiries, or troublesome law-suits, in which might prevails against right. Thou hast taken usury and increase, *ver. 12.* not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it; it was an act of the city or community, the public money that should have been employed in public charity, is put out to usury with extortion. Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are greedy of gain will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the sabbath and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted; *ver. 8.* Thou hast despised mine holy things, holy oracles, holy ordinances; the rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary, they despised them, and therefore were fond of the customs of the heathen. Note, Immorality and dishonesty is commonly attended with a contempt of religion and the worship of God. Thou hast profaned my sabbaths. There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabbath-sanctification that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleanliness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up to punish them for their idolatry and profanation of holy things. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now in the midst of thee they commit lewdness, *ver. 9.* it goes bare-faced; though in the most scandalous instances; as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the discovery of

of the father's nakedness, ver. 10. and is a sin not to be named among Christians without the utmost detestation. 1. Cor. v. 1. and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses Lev. xx. 11. The time to refrain from embracing has not been observed, Eccles. iii. 6. For they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife: with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, ver. 11. And shall not God visit for these things?

7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness, ver. 12. Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldst not have done thus. Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is which they make themselves unfit for; and how formidable his wrath which they make themselves obnoxious to. They that pervert their ways forget the Lord their God, Jer. iii. 21.

2. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes. 1. Let her know, that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and her sins are such as forbid delays, and call for a speedy vengeance. She has made her time to come, ver. 3. her days to draw near, and she is come to her years of maturity for punishment, ver. 4. as an heir that is come to age, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived to such a pitch of impudence in sin, that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow over-much wicked, they die before their time, Eccles. vii. 17. and shorten their reprieves. 2. Let her know, that she hath exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours. Ver. 4. I have made thee a reproach to the heathen, both those that are near, who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem's apostasy and degeneracy; and those afar off, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of, ver. 5. they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach: But now they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, The Lord is righteous. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very scandalous, she is infamous, polluted in name, and has quite lost her credit; and because her punishment is very grievous, she is much vexed, and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those that vex most at their troubles have commonly those about them that will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased at her wickedness, and doth and will witness against it. Ver. 13. I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain. God, both by his prophets, and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them and their murders, the blood which has been in the midst of thee; and all their other sins. Note, God hath sufficiently discovered how angry he is at the wicked courses of his people; and that they may not say but they have had fair warning, he smites his hand against the sin before he lays his hand upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the gain of oppressions, and shake our hands from holding of bribes, because these are sins against which God shakes his hands, Isa. xxxiii. 15.

4. Let her know, that as proud and secure as she is, she is no match for God's judgments, ver. 14. (1.) She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come. I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. He that is true to his promises will be true to his threatenings too, for he is not a man that he should repent. (2.) It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and to stand a siege against his judgments; she bid defiance to the day of the Lord, Isa. v. 19. But, (3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know thou fallest into the hands of a living God. Observe here, (1.) There is a day coming when God will deal with sinners a day of visitation. He deals with some to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions when he sets them on; he deals with others to bring them to ruin; he deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments. But the days of eternity are especially the days in which God will deal with them; when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture. (2.) The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the infirmities which the spirit of a man will sustain; damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to support themselves under their torments. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath, or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. Who knows the power of God's anger?

5. Let her know, that since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, she shall have enough of them, ver. 15. I will not only send among thee the heathen, out of thine own land, but I will scatter thee among them, and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted over by strangers. And since her filthiness and filthy ones continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to refine her, she would not be made clean, Jer. xiii. 27. He will by his judgments consume her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that were incurably bad, and reform those that were inclined to be good.

5. Let her know, that God has disowned her and cast her off: he had been her heritage and portion, but now, ver. 16. Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, thist for thyself, make the best hand thou canst for thyself, for God will no longer undertake for thee. Note, Those that give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. They that resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other comfort and happiness, but what their own hands can furnish them with, and a miserable portion it will prove; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. Thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things. These are the same with this here, thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, and then when it is too late; and own it in the sight of the heathen, that I am the Lord, who alone am a portion sufficient for my people. Note, Those that have lost their interest in God, will know how to value it.

17. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to

blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. 21. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. 22. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

The same melancholy string is still harped upon: and various turns given it to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here shew, or at least it is here shewn him, that the whole house of Israel is become as dross, and as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world, is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now it is corrupt and degenerate, Psalm cxix. 119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.

1. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state in David's and Solomon's time had been a head of gold, when the kingdoms were divided it was as the arms of silver. But now, (1.) It is degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was. They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead; which some make to signify divers sorts of sinners among them; their being brass notes the impudence of some in their wickedness, they are brazen-faced, and cannot blush; their shoes had been iron and brass, Deut. xxxiii. 25. but now their brow is so, Isa. xlviii. 4. Their being tin notes the hypocritical profession of piety, with which many of them cover their iniquity; they have a specious shew but no intrinsic worth. Their being iron notes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their being lead notes their dullness, sottishness, and stupidity: Though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not movable to good. How is the gold become dross! how is the most fine gold changed! So is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, Lam. iv. 1. Yet this is not the worst, these metals though of less value, yet are of good use. But, (2.) The house of Israel is become dross to me. So she is in God's account whatever she is in her own and her neighbour's account. They were silver, but now they are even the dross of silver; the word signifies all the dirt and rubbish and worthless stuff that is separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note, Sinners, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross; vile and contemptible, and of no account, as the evil figs which could not be eaten they were so evil. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves, and no service to man.

2. How the woeful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. The are all gathered together in Jerusalem, thither people fled from all parts of the country as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city. Now God tells them, that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into the furnace or crucible, to be melted down and to have the dross separated from them. They are in the midst of Jerusalem surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and being thus inclosed, (1.) The fire of God's wrath shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be blown to make it burn fiercely and strongly, ver. 20. 21. God will gather them in his anger and fury. The blowing of the fire makes a great noise, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem; when God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the consideration of his own glory, and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to blow the fire of his wrath against sin and sinners, to heat the furnace seven times hotter. (2.) The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be melted; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as brass and lead in the same furnace; as trees are bound in bundles for the fire. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution. (3.) God will leave them in the furnace. Ver. 20. I will gather you into the furnace, and will leave you there. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sets by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it which they design shall be consumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but leave it there. Compare with this Hos. v. 14. I will tear and go away. (4.) Hereby the dross shall be wholly separated and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance: Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer, Prov. xxv. 4. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel, for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and reprobate silver shall they no more be called, Jer. vi. 30.

23. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. 25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. 26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. 27. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. 28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. 29. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. 30. And I sought for a man among them that

that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. 31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Here is, 1. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it, and how much it needed these judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, *Thou art the land that is not cleansed*, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace; means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art *not rained upon in the day of indignation*. This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he withheld the rain from them, *Jer. xiv. 4.* Or when thou art under the token of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art *not rained upon*, i. e. thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to *descend as the rain*: or when thou art corrected thou art not cleansed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a *day of indignation* with thee, yet thy filthiness which should be done away is become more *offensive*, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon. Or, Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with in the *day of indignation*; thou art not rained upon by divine consolations; as the rich man in torment had not a drop of water, or rain, to cool his tongue.

2. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shews that they had all helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing towards the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one *corrupted his way*, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vice.

(1.) The prophets that pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only *deceivers* but *devourers*, ver. 25. and hardened them in their wickedness, both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity; and by their conversation, in which they were as profligate as any. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets against God and religion*, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song, as Ahab's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways. Note, The unity that is among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronize and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may come in sharers with them in the profits of it. They are like a *roaring lion ravening the prey*, they thunder out threats against them whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them to make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters. (1.) *Of their lives*; they have *devoured souls*, have been accessory to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful widows that were comfortable wives. They have persecuted those to death who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy, and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or they *devoured souls* by flattering sinners into a *false peace* and a *vain hope*, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who draw men to wickedness and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murderers of their souls. (2.) *Of their estates*; when Naboth is slain they take possession of his vineyard; they have *seized the treasure and precious things*, as forfeited, some ways or other they had of *devouring the widows houses*, as the Pharisees, *Matt. xxiii. 14.* Or they got this *treasure* and all these *precious things* as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for he that puts not into their mouths, they even *prepare war against him*, Micah. iii. 5. It was sad with Jerusalem when such men as these passed for prophets. (2.) The priests who were teachers by office, and had the custody of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they, ver. 26. (1.) They violated the law of God, which they should have observed and taught others to observe: they made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly brake it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phineas. They did what they had a mind, with an express *non obstante* to the command of God. And how should they teach the people their duty who lived in contradiction to their own? (2.) They *profaned God's holy things*, about which they were to minister, and which they ought to have restrained others from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things that were unqualified by the law, the table of the Lord was contemptible with them; by dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves *profane* them. (3.) They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they shew the people how to put a difference between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts that were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean; between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. (4.) They *hid their eyes from God's sabbaths*, i. e. they took no care about them, it was all one to them whether God's sabbaths were kept holy or no; they neither gave countenance to those who observed them, nor check to those who profaned them, nor did they themselves shew any regard to them, or veneration for them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day, and looked another way when they should have inspected the behaviour of the people on sabbath days. God's sabbaths have such a beauty and glory put upon them by the divine institution as may command respect; but they hid their eyes from them, and would not see that excellency in them. (5.) By all this God himself was *profaned among them*; his authority was slighted, his goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable put upon his holiness. Note, The profanation of the honour of the scriptures, of sabbaths and sacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himself, who is interested in them. (3.) The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any others, ver. 27. they are like *wolves ravening the prey*; for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify, (1.) Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves arbitrary and formidable. (2.) Their own malice and revenge by *shedding blood and destroying souls*, sacrificing to their cruelty all that stood in their way, or had in any thing obliged them. (3.) Their own avarice; all they aim at is to get *dishonest gain*, by crushing and oppressing their subjects; *Lucrì bonus est odor ex re qualibet.* Rem, rem quocunque modo rem. But though they had not power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? we are told how, ver. 28. the prophets, *daubed them with untempered mortar*; told them in

God's name (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did they might dispose of the lives and estates of their subjects as they pleased, and could do no wrong; nay, that in prosecuting such and such whom they had marked out, they did God service: and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences; they also justified what they did to the people, nay, and magnified it as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring. Note, *Daubing prophets* are the great supporters of *ravelling princes*, but will prove at last their great deceivers, for they daub with *untempered mortar* which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they see vanity; they pretend to be diviners, but they divine lies; they pretend a warrant from heaven for what they say, and that it is all as true as gospel: they say, *Thus saith the Lord*, but it is all a sham, for the Lord has not spoken any such thing.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands learned of their princes to abuse it, ver. 29. They that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a *claim of rights* on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for liberty and property, were themselves invaders of it; *The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery*. The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another: this is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such, *Isaiah iii. 5.* *The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour*. It is an aggravation of the sin, that they have *reduced the poor and needy*, whom they should have relieved, and have *oppressed the stranger* and deprived him of his right, to whom they ought to have been not only just but kind. Thus was the apostasy universal, and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them; ver. 30. *I sought for a man among them, that should stand in the gap, but I found none.* Note, (1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people, at which good things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to destroy them. (2.) There is a way of standing in the gap and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation; Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel to turn away the wrath of God, Psalm cxxvi. 23. (3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them, he expects some to intercede for them, and enquires if there be but one that doth; so much is it his desire and delight to shew mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him and be well pleased with him. (4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that not one is found that will either give them a good word, or speak a good word for them. (5.) When it is so, what can be expected but utter ruin? ver. 31. *Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them*, have given it full scope that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is their own way that is therein recompensed upon their heads, and God deals with them no worse, look how much better, than their iniquity deserves.

C H A P. XXIII.

This long chapter, as before chap. xvi. and xx. is a history of the apostasies of God's people from him, and the aggravation of those apostasies under the similitude of corporal whoredom and adultery; here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly. Here is, (1.) The apostasy of Israel and Samaria from God, ver. 1—8. And their ruin for it, ver. 9, 10. (2.) The apostasy of Judah and Jerusalem from God, ver. 11—21. And sentence passed upon them, that they shall in like manner be destroyed for it, ver. 22—35. (3.) The joint wickedness of them both together, ver. 36—44. and the joint ruin of them both, ver. 45—49. And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom, is, that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were there breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. 4. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah. 5. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours. 6. Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. 7. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. 8. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. 9. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. 10. These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for God speaketh the same thing once, yea, twice; yea, many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceiveth it not. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, there is need of *line upon line*, so loth we are to know the worst of ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed are two women, two kingdoms, sister-kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters

daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people: Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe,

1. Their character when they were one, *ver. 3.* They committed whoredoms in Egypt, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, *chap. xx. 8.* The representing of these sins, which are most provoking to God, and most ruining to a people, by the sin of whoredom, plainly intimates what an exceeding sinful sin uncleanness is, how offensive, how destructive. Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins, for other the worst of sins are compared to it here, and often elsewhere; which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of *fleshy lusts*, all appearances of them and approaches to them, as *warring against the soul*, insatiable sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God, and all that is good, debauching conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition.

2. Their names when they became two, *ver. 4.* The kingdom of Israel is called the *elder sister*, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed: the *greater sister*, so the word is, for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God saith of them both, *they were mine*, for they were the seed of Abraham his friend, and of Jacob his chosen; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of their *circumcision*, the seal of the covenant. *They were mine*, and therefore their apostasy was the highest injustice; it was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of benefactors, and a perfidious treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements. Note, Those who have been in profession the people of God, but revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession. *They were mine*, i. e. they were espoused to me, and to me they bore sons and daughters; there were many among them that were devoted to God's honour, and employed in his service, and were the strength and beauty of these kingdoms, as children are of the families they are born in. In this parable Samaria and the kingdom of Israel shall bear the name of Aholah, *her own tabernacle*; because the places of worship, which that kingdom had, were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself their own invention; God never owned it: *her tabernacle to herself*, so some render it, let her take it to herself, and make her best of it. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholibah, *my tabernacle is in her*, because their temple was the place which God himself had chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his presence in it. Note, Of those that stand in relation to God, and make profession of his name, some have greater privileges and advantage than others; and as those who have greater, are thereby rendered the more *inexcusable* if they revolt from God; so those that have lesser, yet will not thereby be rendered *excusable*.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Israel from God, *ver. 5.* Aholah played the harlot when she was mine. Though the ten tribes had deserted the house of David, yet God owned them for his still; though Jeroboam in setting up the golden calves sinned, and made Israel to sin, yet as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though by images, he did not quite cast them off. But the way of sin is down-hill; Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worship of Baal, *1 Kings xvi. 31.* set up that other god, that dunghill god, in competition with Jehovah, *1 Kings xviii. 21.* as a vile adulteress dotes on her lovers, because they are well dressed and make a figure, because they are young and handsome, *ver. 6.* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, desirable young men, genteel, and that pass for men of honour. So she doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Assyrians, who had extended their conquests near them; she admired their idols and worshipped them, admired the pomp of their courts and their military strength, and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as if their own God were not sufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a thousand talents to the king of Assyria, to engage him in his interests, *2 Kings xv. 19.* She doted on the chosen men of Assyria, as worthy to be trusted and employed in the service of the state, (*ver. 7.*) and on all their idols with which she defiled herself. Note, Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and put a confidence in; we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we make an idol of, we defile ourselves with. And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation; neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt, *ver. 8.* Their being idolaters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten; that they should be in love with Egypt's idols, even then when they were continually in fear of Egypt's tyrants and task-masters. But (as some have observed) therefore at that time, when Satan boasted of his having walked through the earth as all his own, to disprove his pretensions God did not say, *Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt?* for they were become idolaters, and were not to be bragged of, but *Hast thou considered my servant Job in the land of Uz?* And this corrupt disposition in them, when they were first formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us, and is woven into our constitution, a strong bias towards the world and the flesh, like that in the Israelites towards idolatry; it was bred in the bone with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt, it would never out of the flesh, though Egypt had been a house of bondage to them; thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us, we have not lost nor got clear of, but still retain them, though the iniquity we were born in was the source of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for their apostasy from God, *ver. 9, 10.* I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers. God first justly gave her up to her lust; Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone; and then gave her up to her lovers. The neighbour nations, whose idolatries she had conformed to, and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction. The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spied out the nakedness of the land; discovered her blind side on which to attack her, stripped her of all her ornaments and all her defences, and so uncovered her, and made her naked and bare; carried her sons and daughters into captivity, slew her with the sword, and quite destroyed that kingdom and put an end to it. We have the story at large, *2 Kings xvii. 6, &c.* where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing kingdom by the Assyrians, is shewed to be their forsaking the God of Israel, fearing other gods, and walking in the statutes of the heathens; it was for this that God was very angry with them, and removed them out of his sight, *ver. 18.* And that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in executing judgments upon them was very remarkable, and shews how God doth often in a way of righteous judgment, make that a scourge to sinners which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners, who now hearken to him and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became famous among men; or infamous rather; she became a name, so the word is; not only she came to be the subject of discourse and much talked of, as the desolation of cities and kingdoms fill the news

papers. But she was thus ruined for her idolatries in *terrorem*, for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewise. As the public execution of notorious malefactors make them such a name, such an ill name as may serve to frighten others from those wicked courses which have brought them to a miserable and shameful end. *Deut. xxi. 21.* All Israel shall hear and fear.

11. And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms, 12. She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. 13. Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way, 14. And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, 15. Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: 16. And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. 17. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. 18. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister, 19. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. 21. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

The prophet Hosea in his time observed, that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatized. *Hos. xi. 12.* Ephraim indeed compasseth me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints; and this was justly expected from them, *Hos. iv. 15.* Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. But this lasted not long; by some unhappy matches made between the house of David, and the house of Ahab, the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah; but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good posture; but it lasted not long, in the reign of Manasseh, soon after the kingdom of Judah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became more corrupt than Israel had been in their inordinate love of idols, *ver. 11.* Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were displeased, because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel; and for that reason became disaffected to him and to his service; instead of being made to stand in awe of him as a jealous God, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better that would admit of partners with them. Note, Those may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves, who do not take warning by his judgments upon others; who see in others what is the end of sin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it. But it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better; and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her whoredoms, than her sister Samaria had been in her whoredoms. This was observed before, *chap. xvi. 51.* Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins.

1. Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, *Isa. i. 21.* She also doted upon the Assyrians, *ver. 12.* joined in league with them, joined in worship with them; grew to be in love with their captains and rulers, and cried up them as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced; see how richly how neatly they are dressed, clothed most gorgeously; how well they sit a horse, they are horsemen riding upon horses; how charmingly they look, all of them desirable young men. And thus they grew to affect every thing that was foreign, and to despise their own nation, and even the religion of it was mean and homely, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. Thus she increased her whoredoms; she fell in love, fell in league with the Chaldeans; Hezekiah himself was faulty this way, when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, *Isa. xxxix. 2.* And the humour increased, *ver. 14.* she doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, *ver. 15, 16.* joined in alliance with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the Jewish nation, and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their worship; thus was she polluted with their whoredoms, *ver. 17.* and thereby she discovered her own whoredom, *ver. 18.* i. e. her own strong inclination to idolatry. And when she had had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew sick of them, and disposed to break her league with them, as Jehoiakim and Zedekiah did, her mind being alienated from them, she courted the Egyptians, doted upon their paramours, *ver. 20.* would come into an alliance with them, and to strengthen the alliance would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for so wise, so rich, so strong was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation now they can take such satisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus they called to remembrance the days of their youth, *ver. 19.* the lewdness of their youth, *ver. 21.* i. e. (1.) They pleased themselves with the remembrance of it. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the gust and relish of the leeks and onions they eat there; or rather of the idolatrous worship they learned there, and brought with them from thence; when they began an acquaintance with Egypt they remembered how merrily their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they

they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus she multiplied her whoredoms, repeated her former whoredoms, and encouraged herself to close with present temptations, by calling to remembrance the days of her youth. Note, Those who instead of reflecting upon their former sins with sorrow and shame, reflect upon them with pleasure and pride, contract new guilt thereby, strengthen their own corruptions, and in effect bid defiance to repentance. This is returning with the dog to his vomit. (2.) They called it God's remembrance, and provoked him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the golden calf, that idol of Egypt, Exod. xxxii. 34. But such was his patience, that he seemed to have forgotten it, till they by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chaldeans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it, and in the day when he visits, he will now, as he hath said, visit for that. It is very observable how this adulteress changeth her lovers: she doted first on the Assyrians, then she thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them; after a while her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful, ver. 20, and she must contract an intimacy with them; which shews the folly, (1.) Of fleshly lusts; when they are indulged they grow humoursome and sickle are soon forfeited, but never satisfied, they must have variety; and what is loved one day is loathed the next. *Unius adulterium matrimonium vocant*, saith Seneca. (2.) Of idolatry. Those who think one God too little, will not think a hundred enough, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insufficient. (3.) Of seeking to creatures for help; we go from one to another, but are disappointed in them all, and can never rest till we have made the God of Israel our help.

2. The faithful God justly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithless city, that is become a harlot. His jealousy soon discovered her lewdness, ver. 13. I saw that she was defiled, that she was debauched, saw which way her inclination was, that the two sisters both took one way, and that Jerusalem grew worse than Samaria; for if we stretch out our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? No doubt he shall; and when he has found it, can he be pleased with it? No, ver. 18. Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister. How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a lewd generation. Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the sinner, and justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner's mind from God; but woe, and thousand woes to those from whom God's mind is alienated, for whom he turns from he will turn against.

22. ¶ Therefore. O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will rise up thy lovers against thee from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side: 23. The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. 24. And they shall come against thee with chariots, waggons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. 25. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose, and thine ears: and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. 26. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28. For thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated: 29. And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. 30. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. 31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. 32. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision; it containeth much. 33. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. 34. Thou shalt even drink it, and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. 35. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of Aholibah, for that she as a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of Heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the instigation of the Devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compassed and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence, and joined in a confederacy with his enemies, and the pretenders to a deity, in contempt of his crown and dignity: to this indictment she has pleaded, *Not guilty & I am not polluted, I have not gone after Balaam*. But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given, and execution awarded according to law. In these verses therefore we have the sentence.

1. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin, are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment. Ver. 22. I will raise up thy lovers against thee; the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire and covet an ac-

quaintance with, but from whom thy mind is since alienated, and with whom thou hast perfidiously broken covenant: they are called thy lovers, ver. 22. and yet ver. 28. them whom thou hatest. Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred; as Amnon's to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very hot against those persons and things, that a little before they were as hot for. Fools run into extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments. And therefore as we should rejoice and weep, as if we rejoiced not and wept not; so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not. *Ita ama tanquam odurus*.

2. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible. Her enemies shall come against her on every side, ver. 22. Those of the several nations that constituted the Chaldean army, ver. 23. all of them great lords and renowned, whose pomp and grandeur, and splendid appearance, made them look the more amiable, when they came as friends to protect and patronize Jerusalem; but the more formidable when they came to chastise its treachery, and aimed at no less than its ruin. (1.) They shall come with a great deal of military force, ver. 24. with chariots and waggons, furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. (2.) They shall have justice on their side; I will set judgment before them; they shall have right with them as well as might; for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him; and therefore they shall judge thee, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but according to their judgments, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy perfidious dealings with them. (3.) They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment; being a war of revenge, they shall deal with thee hatefully, ver. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their swords will be dipped in poison. Thou hatest them, and they shall deal hatefully with thee; those that hate will be hated and hatefully dealt with. (4.) God himself will lead them on, and his anger will be mingled with their's, ver. 25. I will set my jealousy against thee, that shall kindle this fire, and then they shall deal furiously with thee. If men deal never so hatefully, never so furiously with us, if we have God on our side we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress, are, (1.) That all she has shall be seized on. The clothes and the fair jewels with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of, ver. 26. All those things that were the ornaments of their state shall be taken away. They shall take away all thy labour, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare, ver. 29. Both city and country shall be impoverished and all the wealth of both swept away. (2.) That her children shall go into captivity; they shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and make slaves of them, ver. 25. for they are children of whoredoms, unworthy the dignities and privileges of Israelites, Hos. ii. 4. (3.) That she shall be stigmatized and deformed; they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; shall mark thee for a whore, and render thee for ever odious, ver. 25. This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers towards the Jews that fell into their hands; whom it is probable they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the nose they think is meant the kingly dignity; and by the ears, that of the priesthood. (4.) That she shall be exposed to shame; thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered, ver. 29. as when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to light, and what was done long since is then called to mind. (5.) That she shall be quite cut off and ruined. The remnant of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence shall fall by the sword; and the residue of thy houses that have not been battered down about thy ears shall be devoured by the fire, ver. 25. And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

3. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other but Samaria's fate. It is common in giving judgment to have an eye to precedent, so has God in passing this sentence upon Jerusalem, ver. 31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness, and therefore I will give her cup, her portion of miseries, into thy hand; the cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling. Now, (1.) This cup is said to be deep and large, and to contain much, ver. 32. abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries the fruits of that wrath. It is such a cup as that which we read of, Jer. xxv. 15, 16. The cup of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so will they find into whose hand it shall be put. (2.) They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the wicked are said to do, Psal. lxxv. 8. Thou shalt drink it, and suck it out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee, ver. 34. thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord, Isa. li. 20. as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy but it must be drank, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God, thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it. (3.) They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits end, as men in drink are, staggering and stumbling, and ready to fall, ver. 33. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow. Note, Drunkenness hath sorrow attending it to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment is here represented by it. Who would think that what is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the greatest misery, should yet be with many a beloved sin; that they should damn their own souls to distemper their own bodies? Who has woe and sorrow like them? Prov. xxiii. 29. (4.) Being so intoxicated they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them, ver. 32. Thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision, ver. 32. as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people he makes their judges fools, and pours contempt on their princes, Job xii. 17—21.

4. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed, and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. (1.) They have been bad, very bad, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them. Ver. 30. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and ver. 35. Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back. Note, Forgiveness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us and authority over us, is at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. Therefore men wander after idols because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin, if they did not first cast God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last; Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms, i. e. thou shalt suffer the punishment of it, and thou alone must bear the blame. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they, who will not part with their lewdness and their whoredoms must bear them.

them. (2.) They shall be better, much better, and this fire, though consuming on many, shall be refining to a remnant, *ver. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee.* The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, *What have we to do any more with idols?* Observe, (1.) How inveterate the disease was; *thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt.* Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. (2.) How complete the cure was notwithstanding; though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as lift up thine eyes to the idols again, nor remember Egypt with pleasure any more. They shall avoid the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it: they shall not remember Egypt, i. e. they shall not retain any of that affection for idols, which they had from the very infancy of their nation. They got it through the corruption of nature in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the taking away of sin; of that sin; so that whereas before the captivity no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity no nation was more vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were; insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews as much as any thing in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

36. ¶ The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37. That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. 38. Moreover this they have done unto me; they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. 40. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came: for whom didst thou wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments. 41. And sattest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. 42. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. 43. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? 44. Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women. 45. ¶ And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. 47. And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. 49. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters were in effect become one again: And therefore in these verses the prophet takes those to talk jointly who were thus conjoined. Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together? *ver. 36.* wilt thou go about to excuse for them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse. Or rather, thou shalt now be employed in God's name to judge them, chap. xx. 4. The matter is rather worse than better since the union.

1. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of; declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

(1.) They have been guilty of gross idolatry, here called adultery; with their idols they have committed adultery, *ver. 37.* have broken their marriage-covenant with God; have lusted after the gratifications of a carnal sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

(2.) They have committed the most barbarous murders, in sacrificing their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural, that they deserve to hear of it upon all occasions: *Blood is in their hands,* innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire, *ver. 37.* not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured; a sign they loved their idols better than that which was dearest to them in the world.

(3.) They have profaned the sacred things, with which God had dignified and distinguished them. This they have done unto me, this indignity, this injury, *ver. 38.* Every contempt put upon that which is holy, reflects upon him who is the fountain of holiness; and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God had set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it, by making it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse, there they set up their idols and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets. God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them, by doing all

manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised but allowed and encouraged by authority. They defiled the sanctuary on the same day that they profaned the sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath-day was an aggravation. We use to say, the better day the better deed, but here the better day the worse deed. God takes notice of the circumstances of sin, which add to the guilt. He shews, *ver. 39.* what was their profanation, both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath. They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of the human nature; and then came the same day, their hands embued with the blood of their children, and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary; not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, as other Israelites did, expecting acceptance with him, notwithstanding these villainies they were guilty of. As if God either did not know their wickedness, or did not hate it. Thus they profaned the sanctuary, as if that were a protection to the worst of malefactors; for thus they did in the midst of his house. Note, It is a profanation of God's solemn ordinances, when those that are grossly and openly profane and vicious, impudently and impudently to intrude upon the services and privileges of them. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Friend, how camest thou in hither?

(4.) They have courted foreign alliances, been proud of them, and reposed a confidence in them. This also is represented by the sin of adultery, for it was a departure from God, not only to whom alone they ought to pay their homage, and not to idols, but in whom alone they ought to put their trust, and not in creatures. Israel was a peculiar people, must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and lay their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them, or in league with them: But this they have now done; they have entered into strict alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them. Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correspondence with great people, has often been a snare to good people. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her high allies, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

1. She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her, *ver. 40.* you sent a messenger for men to come from far. It seems then the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent underhand to desire them to court her: and so they came. The wisest and best may be drawn unavoidably into company and conversation with profane and wicked people, but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such and to court it.

2. Great preparations were made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience; which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome. Jezebel-like thou paintedst thy face, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, *ver. 40.* The king and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou satest upon a stately bed, *ver. 41.* a stately throne; a table was prepared, whereon thou hast set mine oil and mine incense. This was either, (1.) A feast for the ambassadors, a noble treat, agreeable to the other preparations. There was incense to perfume the room, and oil to anoint their heads. Or, (2.) An altar already furnished for the ambassadors use in the worship of their idols; to let them know that the Israelites were not so strict-laced, but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea and complimented them so far as to join with them in their devotions, though the law of their God was against it, yet they could easily dispense with themselves to oblige a friend. The oil and incense God calls his, not only because it was the gift of his providence, but because it should have been offered at his altar; which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with it. See *Hos. ii. 8.*

3. There was great joy at their coming, as if it were such a blessing as never happened to Jerusalem before, *ver. 42.* A voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: The people were very easy, for they thought themselves very safe and happy, now they had such powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion. The men of the common sort were there to grace the solemnity and to increase the crowd; and with them were brought Sabeans from the wilderness: The margin reads it drunkards from the wilderness, that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Whoever they were, in honour of the ambassadors, they put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads; which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

4. God by his prophets warned them against making these dangerous leagues with foreigners, *ver. 43.* Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, and from the first was fond of leagues with the heathen, of matching with their families, *Judges iii. 6.* and afterwards of making alliances with their kingdoms; and though often disappointed therein, would never be dissuaded from it: This was the adultery she was old in. I said, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her, that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either: They are iron and clay that will not mix, nor will God bless it or smile upon it. But it seems her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, doth but make her the more impudent and insatiable in them; for though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, yet they went in unto her, *ver. 44.* A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made first with this, and then with the other foreign state. Samaria did so, Jerusalem did so, like lewd women. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and care, and the assurances of protection he gave them; they could not think his covenant with them security enough. But they must by treaties and leagues, politic ones (they thought) and well concerted, throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their interests under their protection. Note, Those hearts go a whoring from God that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an arm of flesh, *Jer. xvii. 5.*

2. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins. *Ver. 45.* The righteous men, they shall judge them. Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the righteous men that shall judge them. The Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem, those were comparatively righteous, had a sense of justice between man and man, and justly repented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which we are sure are all righteous. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was in God's name to judge them, and pass sentence upon them. Or, we may take it as an appeal to all righteous men, to all that have a sense of equity, they shall all judge concerning these cities, and agree in their verdict, that so far as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder,

murder, and the guilt is national, that therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity that *shed blood*, and are *adulteresses*. Righteous men will say why should bloody filthy cities escape any better than bloody filthy persons? judge, I pray thee, Isa. v. 3.

This judgment being given by the *righteous men*, the *righteous God* will award execution. See here, (1.) What the execution will be, ver. 46, 47. The same as before, ver. 23, &c. and ver. 28, &c. God will bring a company of enemies upon them, who shall be made to serve his holy purposes, even then when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled: this company shall stone them with stones as malefactors; shall single them out, and dispatch them with their swords; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions, witness that of Achan, they shall slay their children and burn their houses. (2.) What will be the effects of it. (1.) Thus they shall suffer for their sins, their *lewdness shall be recompensed upon them*, ver. 49. and they shall bear the sins of their idols as before, ver. 35. Thus God will assert the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is. (2.) Thus they shall be broken off from their sins. *I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land*, ver. 48. as before, ver. 27. The destruction of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it shall quite take away their sin; so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace, purified from its dross. (3.) Thus other cities and nations will have fair warning given them to keep themselves from idols; that *all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness*. This is the end of the punishment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others; who will see and fear; smite the scorner, and the simple will beware. The judgments of God upon some are designed to teach others, and happy they who receive instructions from them, not to tread in the steps of sinners, lest they be taken in their snares, and those who would be taught this must know God is the Lord, ver. 49. that he is the governor of the world, a God that judgeth in the earth, and with whom there is no respect to persons.

C H A P. XXIV.

Here are two sermons in this chapter preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from mount Ebal, the mount of curses, both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to shew, that in the issue of that siege he should be not only master of that place, but destroyer of it. (1.) By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire, is shewed the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly for her filthiness, ver. 1—14. (2.) By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife is shewed that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair, ver. 15—27.

1. **A** GAIN in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, Write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. 3. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it. 4. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. 5. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them see the bones of it therein. 6. ¶ Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece: let no lot fall upon it. 7. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground to cover it with dust; 8. That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance: I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. 9. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. 10. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. 11. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the bras of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. 12. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum shall be in the fire. 13. In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. 14. I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the LORD.

We have here,

1. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon, of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it, ver. 2. Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon that is now abroad with his army thou knowest not where, set himself against Jerusalem this same day. It was many miles, it was many days journey from Jerusalem to Babylon; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was, that the design was upon Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, this day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean

Vol. II. No. CXXXVI.*

army is set down before it. Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer, that since he was right in his news he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with heaven.

2. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter in his book, memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jehoiakin's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated, chap. i. 2. which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiakin was carried off) in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 Kings xxv. 1. See how God revealeth things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture prophecies. Known unto God are all his works.

3. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is, that the siege of Jerusalem now begun will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he may say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those who were yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

1. He must shew them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and probably was designed to put them in mind of that, Jer. i. 13. *I see a seething pot, with the face towards the north*, and the explanation of it, ver. 15. makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations. And as the comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said, chap. xi. 3. *The city is the caldron, and we are the flesh*; meaning, we are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass; well, saith God, it shall be so, you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it, ver. 4. let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock, ver. 5. with the choice pieces, ver. 4. and the marrow-bones: and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot, or under it, the whole beast may be made use of. A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire, for the siege was to be long, yet it is a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat. They that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety would be sadly disappointed, when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was no getting out of it; but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be constructed as a woe to the bloody city, ver. 6. And again, ver. 9. being bloody, let it go to pot to be boiled, it is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

1. What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a boiling pot over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. (1.) Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers; and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them; ver. 9. *I will make the pile for fire great*. Commission is given to the Chaldeans, ver. 10. *to heap on wood, and kindle the fire*; make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners will never abate, much less go out for want of fuel. *Tophet has fire and much wood*, Isa. xxx. 33. (2.) The meat as it is boiled is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. *Consume the flesh*, i. e. let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags; *spice it well*, and make it savoury, for those that will feed sweetly upon it: *let the bones be burned*, either the bones under the pot, let them be consumed with the other fuel; or, as some think, the bones in the pot: let it boil so furiously, as that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be, by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery. And then, ver. 6. *Bring it out piece by piece*, let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword, or made a prisoner; let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man doth upon a good dish of meat when it is set before him. *Let no lot fall upon it*; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out and devoured first or last, and therefore it is no matter for calling lots which shall be fetched out first. It was a very severe military execution, when David measured Moab with two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive, 2 Sam. viii. 2. But here is no line, no lot of mercy made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction. (3.) When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting the city on fire, ver. 11. The scum of the meat, or as some translate it, the rust of the metal is got into the pot, that there is no making it clean, by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or rather molten in it, and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

2. What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem, but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with: For,

1. It is a bloody city, ver. 7, 8. *Her blood is in the midst of her*. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in bloodshed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, fit to be concealed, Deut. xxiii. 13. much less dangerous. Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed upon a rock, where it would not soak in, upon the top of a rock, in despite of divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, on the top of a rock; or it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they caused fury to come up and take vengeance, ver. 8. It could not be avoided, but that God must in anger visit for these things, his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this. If such impudent murderers as these, that even dare divine vengeance, go unpunished, it will be said that God has forsaken the earth. It is absolutely necessary, that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit the punishment should be so too. *I have set her blood on the top of a rock*.

Jerusalem was to be made an *example*, and therefore was made a *spectacle* to the world: God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. Those that *sin before all*, it is fit they should be *rebuked before all*: and that their reputation shall not be confuted by the concealment of their punishment, who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

2. It is a *filthy city*. Great notice is taken in the reddition of the comparison of the *scum of this pot*, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the *pot whose scum is therein, and is not gone out of it*, ver. 6. The *great scum* that *went not forth out of her*, ver. 12. that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was *molten in it*, ver. 11. some of this runs over *into the fire*, ver. 12. inflames that and makes it burn the more furiously, but *it shall all be consumed at last*, ver. 11. When the hand of God was gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more imprudent and outrageous in sin: quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last degree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net: This was *their scum*; in their distress they *trespassed yet more against the Lord*; like that king *Ahaz*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. There is little hopes of those who are made worse by that which should make them better; whose corruptions are excited and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God, which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them. Nor of those whose *scum boiled up* once in convictions and confessions of sin, as if it would be *taken off* by reformation, but afterwards returned again, in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again.

This was Jerusalem's case, *she was wearied with lies*, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, *wearied herself* with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, ver. 12. Note, Those that follow after lying vanities weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, ver. 13, 14. Because she is incurably wicked she is abandoned to ruin without remedy. 1. Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain, ver. 13. *In thy filthiness is lewdness*, i. e. Thou art become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts, *In thy filthiness there is a rooted lewdness*; as appears by this, *I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged*. I have given thee purging physic, but it has not worked; I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual: the intention of them has not been answered. Note, It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. (2.) It is therefore resolved, that no more such methods shall be used. *Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more*. The fire shall no longer be a *refining* fire; but a *consuming* fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed are justly *given up*, and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still*. (3.) Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin. *I will cause my fury to rest upon thee*: this is the same with what is said of the later Jews, that *wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. ii. 16. They deserve it, *according to thy doings they shall judge thee*, ver. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was, *I the Lord have spoken it*, who am able to make good what I have spoken: *it shall come to pass*, nothing shall prevent it, *for I will do it myself*. *I will not go back upon any intreaties*, the decree is gone forth, and *I will not spare* in compassion to them, *neither will I repent*. He will neither change his mind nor change his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he hath given of favour to his people: and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be *false*, or they must be *damned*.

15. ¶ Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 16. Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19. ¶ And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? 20. Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. 22. And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet; ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another. 24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign; according to all that he hath done shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD. 25. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters. 26. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? 27. In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb; and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem: for after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, chap. xxxiii. 21. He had assured them in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them, that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

(1.) The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear: the more shame for them, that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expence to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it.

(1.) He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him, ver. 16. *Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke*. Note, 1. A married state may very well agree with a prophetic office; it is *honourable in all*, and therefore not sinful in ministers. 2. Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations; no doubt Ezekiel found a prudent tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. 3. Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a *covering of the eyes*, Gen. xx. 16. to restrain wandering looks after others; but a *desire of the eye*, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the *desire of the eyes*, which find not any object more grateful. 4. That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the *desire of our eyes* may be removed from us, and may become the sorrow of our hearts; which is a good reason why those that *have wives* should be *as though they had none*; and those who *rejoice in them*, *as though they rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Death is a *stroke* which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. 5. When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, we must see and own the hand of God in it. *I take away the desire of thine eyes*. He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleaseth: he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them, and *may he not do what he will with his own*? 6. Under afflictions of this kind it is good for us to remember that we are *sons of men*; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a *son of Adam*, thy wife is a daughter of *Eve*, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to, and *shall the earth be forsaken for us*? According to this prediction he tells us, ver. 18. *I spake unto the people in the morning*; for God sent his prophets *rising up early*, and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, (1.) Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that. (2.) We may the easier bear an affliction, if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

(2.) He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the *natural* expressions of sorrow, ver. 16. He must not give vent to his passion by weeping, or letting his tears run down: though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and when the body is *sworn*, it is fit it should thus be watered; but Ezekiel is not allowed to do this; though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and would perhaps be evil thought of by the people if he did it not. Much less might he use the *customary* formalities of mourners: he must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the *tire of his head*; must *put on his shoes*, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not *cover his lips*, not throw a veil over his face, as mourners were wont to do, Lev. xiii. 45. must not be of a *sorrowful countenance*, *appearing unto men to fast*, Matt. vi. 18. He must not *eat the bread of men*, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves: but if it were sent he must not eat it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be sore against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commands, and *I did in the morning as I was commanded*. He appeared in public in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do without any signs of mourning. (1.) Here there was something *peculiar*, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself, and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed, even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. (2.) Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope*, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could work spare, as if we had *lost our God*, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to *bless the name of the Lord*, even when he *takes* as well as when he *gives*.

2. The explication and application of this sign. The people enquired the meaning of it, ver. 19. *Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so*? They knew Ezekiel was a loving husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it, but for some good reason, and for instruction to them; and perhaps were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are enquiring concerning the things of God, our enquiry must be what those things are *to us*? What are we concerned in them? What convictions, what counsel, what comfort do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?

Ezekiel gives them an answer *verbatim*, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must *speak to the house of Israel*.

(1.) Let them know, that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, ver. 21. If this were done to the green tree, *what shall be done to the dry*? If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence, God shewed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined: *God will take away the desire of your eyes*. Note, The removal of others comforts should awaken us to think of parting with ours too, for *are we better than they*? We know not how soon the same cup or a more bitter one may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will take away that which their soul pitieth, i. e. of which they say, *what pity is it that it should*

be cut off and destroyed? That for which your souls are afraid, so some read it, you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? (1.) That which was their public pride, the temple; *I will profane my sanctuary*, by giving that into the enemy's hand to be plundered and burnt. This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us, that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more the desire of our eyes, than any creature-comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be our's too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness, yet are very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy, by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the excellency of their strength; they had many strong holds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all; it was the pride of their strength, i. e. they prided in it as their strength, that they were the temple of the Lord, Jer. vii. 4. Note, The church privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away, (2.) That which was their family pleasure, which they looked upon with delight, *your sons and your daughters* (which are dearer to you, because they are but a few left of many; the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans. What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

(2.) Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, *Ye shall do as I have done*, ver. 22. *You shall not mourn or weep*, ver. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves, Jer. xvi. 6. not that there shall be any such merciful circumstance without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow. But they shall not mourn! for, (1.) Their grief shall be so great, that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it, their passions shall suffice them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by giving vent to it. (2.) Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be hardened in their sorrows, Job vi. 10. and perfectly stupified, and moped (as we say) with them. (3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs. (4.) They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: you will be so entirely taken up with solid substantial griefs, that you will have no room for the shadow of it. (5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going barefoot; for it is well known every body is a mourner. (6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it, which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, *ye shall pine away for your iniquities*, with feared consciences and reprobate minds, and *ye shall mourn*, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one to another, murmuring and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burden heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people use to do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

3. An appeal to the event for the confirmation of all this, ver. 24. *When this cometh*, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, *then ye shall know that I am the Lord God*, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign. Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached, will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe,

1. The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in, ver. 25. *In that day*, that terrible day, when the city shall be broken up, *I will take from them*, (1.) That which they depended on, *their strength*, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war, none shall stand them in stead. (2.) That which they boasted of; *the joy of their glory*, that which they looked upon as most their glory and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God and the palaces of their princes. (3.) That which they delighted in: which was the desire of their eyes, and on which they set their minds. Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at and dote upon the things that are seen; and it is their folly to set their minds upon that which they have no assurance of, and which may be taken from them in a moment, Prov. xxiii. 5. *Their sons and their daughters* were all this, *their strength, and joy, and glory*, and these shall go into captivity.

2. The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not by revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought him, ver. 2. but in an ordinary way, ver. 26. *He that escapes in that day shall*, by a special direction of providence, come to thee to bring thee intelligence of it; which we find now done, chap. xxxix. 21. The ill news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives, it came too soon.

3. The divine impression which he should be under upon the receiving of that notice, ver. 27. Whereas from this time to that Ezekiel was thus far dumb, that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbour nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to speak again to the children of his people, chap. xxxiii. 2—24. then his mouth shall be opened. He was suspended from prophesying against them in the mean time, because Jerusalem being besieged his prophecies could not be sent into the city; because when God was speaking so loud by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word, and because then the accomplishments of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for: thus Christ forbid his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ, till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. But then thou shalt speak with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion. Note, God's prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again, (as he will in due time; for even the witnesses that are slain shall arise) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for a while silent, that people may the more certainly and fully know that God is the Lord.

C H A P. XXV.

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges, but it must not end there, and therefore they must not. Ezekiel had finished his testimony which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watch-tower and wait the issue; and yet he must not be silent; there are divers nations bordering upon the

land of Israel, which he must prophesy against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity. In this chapter we have his prophecy, (1.) Against the Ammonites, ver. 1—7. (2.) Against the Moabites, ver. 8—11. (3.) Against the Edomites, ver. 11—14. (4.) Against the Philistines, ver. 15—17 that which is laid to the charge of each of them is their barbarous and insolent carriage towards God's Israel; for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hand. God's resenting it thus would be an encouragement to Israel to believe, that though he had dealt thus severely with them, yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them and plead their cause.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; 3. And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; 4. Behold therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 6. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; 7. Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries, I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Here, the prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is also God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say in answer to it? he is bidden to set his face against the Ammonites, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God set his face against them, for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, Psalm xxxiv. 16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore set his face as a flint, Isaiah i. 7. He must shew his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent; and thus must shew, that though he had prophesied so much and so long against Israel, yet still he was for Israel; and while he witnessed against their corruptions, yet adhered to and glorified in God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them; against whom their faces are set.

2. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years, and knows little of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities, ver. 3. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, *Aha, so would we have it*. They were glad to see, (1.) The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans; this is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them. (2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when the land of Israel was made desolate, the cities burnt, and the country wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of Judah went into captivity. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves, they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them; partly because they envied their wealth, and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion and the divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again, ver. 6. *They clapped with their hands* to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and so set them on as dogs upon the game; or they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their plaudits, thinking it well acted; never was there any thing more diverting or entertaining to them. They stamped with their feet, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion: they not only rejoiced in heart, but they could not forbear shewing it; though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it. Especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall; if so, they had been the more excusable. Most people are for themselves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity. *Thou hast rejoiced in heart with all thy despite*, which signifies both scorn and hatred against the land of Israel. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours entertainment. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have rejoiced in Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but cross or pile which should be besieged first, Rabbah or Jerusalem, chap. xxi. 20. And they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their intolerance against Jerusalem was to them an evident token of perdition, Phil. i. 28. It is a very wicked thing to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in shewing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, nor any thing more provoking than to help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, Zech. i. 15.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin, for this insolence which they were guilty of; God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, *Prov. xiv. 17, 18.* God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore they that touch that shall be made to know they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, *chap. xxi. 28.* Had they repented, that had been revoked, but now it is ratified. (1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them; *I will deliver thee to the men of the east*, i. e. first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem; as Josephus relates, *Antiq. lib. x. cap. 11.* And then to the Arabians, who were properly the children of the east, who when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors: shepherds tents were their palaces, these they set up in the country of the Ammonites, there they made their dwellings, *ver. 4.* They enjoyed the products of the country, *they shall eat thy fruit, and drink thy milk; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second hand: they made use even of the royal city for their cattle, ver. 5.* *I will make Rabbah*, that was a nice and splendid city, to be a stable of camels: for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a habitation of brutish men, justly therefore it is now made a stable for camels: and the country a couching place for flocks, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished. (2.) God himself acts as an enemy to them, *ver. 7.* *I will stretch out mine hand upon thee*, a hand that will reach far and strike home; which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand, not bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them for a spoil to the heathen, so that their neighbours shall prey upon them; but will cut them off from the people, and make them perish out of the countries, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, *Jer. xlix. 1, &c.* What can sound more terrible than that resolution? *ver. 7.* *I will destroy thee*, for the almighty God is able both to save and to destroy, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here, *ver. 5.* and *ver. 7.* conclude with this, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord.* For, (1.) Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. (2.) Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God and be poor, than be rich and ignorant of him.

8. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; 9. Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kirithaim, 10. Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 12. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. 14. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD. 15. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because the Philistines have dealt my revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. 17. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted and condemned to destruction, for contributing to and triumphing in Jerusalem's fall.

1. The Moabites. Seir, which was the feat of the Edomites, is joined with them, *ver. 5.* because they said the same as the Moabites, but they were afterwards reckoned with by themselves, *ver. 12.* Now observe, (1.) What was the sin of the Moabites, they said, *Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen.* They triumphed, 1. In the apostasies of Israel; were pleased to see them forsake their God and worship idols, and hoped in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the house of Judah would be like all the heathen, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession, they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink and be run down and quite abandoned: but let the Moabites know that though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution. 2. They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, *The house of Judah is like all the heathen*, in as ill a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen, are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them. Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance are ready to conclude that the people of God

have lost all their privileges, when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which doth not follow, for good men even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, yet have graces and comforts within, sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet indeed it is vastly different. (2.) What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin, *ver. 9, 10.* *I will open the side of Moab*, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. (1.) See here how it shall be exposed; the frontier towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be the glory of the country, which they trusted in and boasted of as impregnable, these shall decay, be deserted or betrayed, or fall into the enemies hand, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will, may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection but that of the divine power, providence and promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. (2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed, the men of the east, when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too; God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he giveth to whomsoever he will. The Arabians, that are shepherds and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an over-ruling providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war and cunning hunters, that live turbulently. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, they shall no more be remembered among the nations, *ver. 10.* for they had been accessory to the murder of Gedaliah, *Jer. xl. 14.* But of the Moabites it is said, *I will execute judgments upon Moab*; they shall see the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall: however, so far as that they shall know that I am the Lord; that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

2. The Edomites: the posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is (1.) The sin of the Edomites, *ver. 12.* They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced, to do them some real mischiefs; probably made incursions upon their frontiers and plundered their country; *Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance.* The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted; Amaziah severely chastised them, *2 Kings xiv. 7.* and for this they took vengeance; now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, *raise it, raise it.* *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* but cut off those that escaped; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, *ver. 11, 12, &c.* It is called here revenging a revenge, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he has greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, *Vengeance is mine.* We are forbidden to revenge, or to bear a grudge, Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a bale thing for the Edomites now in revenge for it to smite them secretly: but the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals: and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old score, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it, *Deut. xxiii. 7.* *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite.*

(2.) The judgments threatened against them for this sin. God will take them to task for it; *ver. 13.* *I will stretch out my hand upon Edom.* Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation. (1.) They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will lay his vengeance upon them, *ver. 14.* and they shall know my vengeance. They that will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them, may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and they that will not believe and fear his vengeance, shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with according to God's anger, and according to his fury, not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them. (2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them by the hand of his people Israel; they suffer much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, *Jer. xlix. 8.* But besides that there were saviours to come upon mount Zion, who should judge the mount of Esau, *Obad. 21.* and Israel's redeemer comes with died garments, *from Bozrah, Isa. lxiii. 1.* this implies a promise that Israel should recover himself again, to that degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find, *1 Mac. v. 3.* that Judas Maccabeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil. And Josephus saith, *Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 17.* that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed, when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done.

3. The Philistines. And (1.) Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites; they have dealt by revenge with the people of Israel, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, not to disturb them only, but to destroy them, for the old hatred, *ver. 15.* the old grudge they bore them, or as the margin reads it, *with perpetual hatred*, a hatred that began long since, and which they resolved to continue: the anger was implacable; they dealt by revenge, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart was upon it. (2.) Their punishment likewise is much the same, *ver. 16.* They that were for destroying God's people shall themselves be cut off and destroyed. And *ver. 17.* they that were for avenging themselves, God will execute great vengeance upon them. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, *Jer. xlvii.* It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehension of their own danger; when their neighbour's house was on fire, it was time to look to their own; but their impiety and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them, that the cup was going round; and they were not the less safe for their being secure.

C H A P. XXVI.

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among

among the nations, nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar, which being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prediction of the destruction of Tyre. We have the burden of Tyre, *Isa. xxiii.* It is but just mentioned in *Jeremiah* as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, chap. *xxv.* 22—xxvii. 3—xlvi. 4. But *Ezekiel* is ordered to be large upon that head. In this chapter we have, (1.) The sin charged upon more, which was triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 2. (2.) The destruction of Tyre itself foretold. (1.) The extremity of this destruction, it shall be utterly ruined, ver. 4—6. And again, ver. 12, 13, 14. (2.) The instruments of this destruction, many nations, ver. 3. And the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army, ver. 7—11. (3.) The great surprise that this should give to the neighbour nations, who would all admire the fall of so great a city and be alarmed at it, ver. 15—21.

1. **AND** it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken (that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me, I shall be replenished now she is laid waste: 3. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against thee O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. 4. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. 5. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. 6. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7. ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies and much people. 8. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field, and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. 9. And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. 10. By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariot when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. 11. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. 12. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses, and they shall lay thy stones: and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. 13. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. 14. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more; for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and in the first day of the month, but it is not said what month; some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, which was the fourth month, others the month after: or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here,

1. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem. *Ezekiel* was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem, ver. 2. *Aha, she is broken*, broken to pieces. that was the gates of the people, to whom there was a great resort, and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account, and some upon another, and I shall get by it: all the wealth, power, and interest, which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre; and so now she is laid waste, I shall be replenished. We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary, as the Ammonites and Edomites had, nor were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews, they were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation; and therefore were not so bigotted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls that lived retired, and knew not the world; all their care was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem, not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians: but Tyre promised herself, that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade and commerce, that now she shall have Jerusalem's customers, and the great men from all parts that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of themselves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in those parts had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem; and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that doth most easily beset us, but it is not thought to be such an ill thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break or fall into disgrace, we shall be replenished, now they are laid waste. But this comes from a selfish covetous principle, and a desire to be placed

alone in the midst of the earth, as we grudged that any should live by us: This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourselves, which the law of God so expressly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happiness; which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruin of others; and we see they are often disappointed.

2. The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus, it was a pleasant and wealthy city; and might have continued so, if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities, and sent her an address of condolence; but when instead of that, she shewed herself pleased with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God saith, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, ver. 3. And let her not expect to prosper long if God be against her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her. Many nations shall come against thee; i. e. an army made up of many nations; or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God against them may expect all the creatures against them; for what peace can they have with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in as the waves of the sea, one upon the neck of another with an irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, that had many kings tributaries to him, and dependants on him; besides those that were his captives, *Dan. ii. 37, 38.* He is that head of gold. He shall come with a vast army, horses and chariots, &c. all land forces; we do not find he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by sea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find, chap. *xxix.* 18. where it is called a great service which he served against Tyrus. He shall besiege it in form, ver. 8. make a fort and cast a mount, and, ver. 9. shall set engines of war against the walls. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, ver. 10. They shall make a noise that shall even shake the walls; and they shall shout at every attack, as soldiers do, when they enter a city that is broken up: the horses shall prance with so much fury and violence that they shall even tread down the streets though never so well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution. (1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall destroy the walls, and break down the towers, ver. 4. For what walls are so strong built as to be a fence against the judgments of God? Her strong garrisons shall go down to the ground, ver. 11. And the walls shall be broke down, ver. 11. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last. (2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed; her daughters which are in the field, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them shall be slain by the sword, ver. 6. The invaders begin with them that come first in their way. And, ver. 11. He shall slay thy people with the sword, not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers, they shall be put to the sword, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long. (3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror, ver. 12. They shall make a prey of the merchandise, it was in hope of the plunder, that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are kept for the owners to their hurt; make a thicket; and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them, and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who are thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief. (4.) The city itself shall be laid in ruins. All the pleasant houses shall be destroyed, ver. 12. that were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, they shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolations of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined, the enemy shall not only pull down the houses but shall carry away the stones and the timber, which might serve for the rebuilding of it, and shall lay them in the midst of the water, not to be recovered or ever made use of again. Nay, ver. 4. I will scrape her dust from her; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid in the midst of the water, ver. 12. The foundation is in the dust, that dust shall be taken away, and then the city must fall of course. When Jerusalem was destroyed, it was ploughed like a field, *Mic. iii. 12.* But the destruction of Tyre is carried further than so, the very soil of it shall be scraped away; and it shall be made like the top of a rock, ver. 4. and again, ver. 14. pure rock that hath no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place, for the spreading of nets, ver. 5. and again, ver. 14. it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon and mend them. (5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy, ver. 13. I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease. Tyre had been a joyous city, *Isa. xxiii. 7.* with her songs she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade; but now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport. Lastly, it shall be built no more, ver. 14. not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence, nor built any more in the same place within the sea, nor built of a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be no more. For God hath spoken it, ver. 5—14. and when what he hath said is accomplished, they shall know thereby that he is the Lord, and not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.

15. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus, Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? 16. Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones; and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling, they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee. 17. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed that was inhabited of sea-faring men, the renowned city which was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it? 18. Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure. 19. For thus saith the Lord GOD, When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; 20. When I shall bring thee down with them

that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the lower parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; 21. I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are mighty affecting.

1. See how *high*, how *great* Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great aggravation of their present disgrace and poverty. Tyre was a *renowned city*, ver. 17. famous among the nations, the crowning city, so she is called, *Isa. xxxiii.* 8. a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her; she was *inhabited of seas*, i. e. of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the *abundance of the seas*, and the *treasures hid in the sand*. She was *strong in the sea*: easy of access to her friends, but to enemies inaccessible; fortified by a *wall of water* which made her impregnable. So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with her pride, *caused their terror* to be on all that *haunted* that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of disobliging them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause their terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how *low*, how *little* Tyre is made, ver. 19, 20. This *renowned city*, is made a *desolate city*, is no more frequented as it has been, there is no more resort of merchants to it, it is *like the cities not inhabited*, which are no cities, and having none to keep them in repair will go to decay of themselves; Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be brought down with them that descend into the pit, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, that lie in the bottom of the dead sea: Or, she shall be in the condition of those that have been long buried, of the people of old time, that are older inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground; such shall Tyre be, *free among the dead*; set in the lower parts of the earth, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be like the places desolate of old, as well as like persons dead of old; it shall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall *not be inhabited* again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that *it shall be no more*; the Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre, *Thou shalt be sought for, and never found again*. New persons may build a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best fortified and best furnished are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island, many cities are spoken of, as in being when the Romans were here, which now our antiquaries scarce know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence, but Roman urns and coins dug up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever, and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in, ver. 15. *There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee*, many slain, and great men; it is probable when the city was taken, the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword; then did the *wounded cry*, and cried in vain to the pitiless conquerors; they cried *quarter*, but it would not be given them; the wounded are slain without mercy, or rather that is the only mercy that is shewed them, that the second blow shall rid them out of their pain.

4. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in upon the fall of Tyre. That is elegantly expressed here, to shew how astonishing it should be. (1.) *The islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall*, ver. 15. As if a great merchant break, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which they are afraid they shall lose: Or, when they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the *isles* who thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyre fall, shall tremble, and be troubled, saying, What will become of us? And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands of the Mediterranean sea, shall feel themselves sensibly touched by the destruction of Tyre, it being a place they had so much knowledge of, such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with. (2.) *The princes of the sea* shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands; or the rich merchants, who live like princes, *Isa. xxiii.* 8. and the master of ships who command like princes, they shall condole the fall of Tyre, in a most compassionate and pathetic manner, ver. 16. *They shall come down from their thrones* as neglecting the business of their thrones, and despising the pomp of them; they shall lay away their robes of state, their *broidered garments*, and shall clothe themselves all over with *tremblings*, with sackcloth that shall make them shiver. Or, they shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble upon this occasion; they shall sit upon the ground in shame and sorrow; they shall tremble every moment at the thought of what is happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall take up a lamentation for thee, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, ver. 17. *How art thou destroyed*. (1.) It shall be a *great surprise* to them, and they shall be affected with wonder; that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so framed for politics, and so full of money, which the sinews of war, and that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last. Ver. 21. *I make thee a terror*. Note, Those who make themselves a terror to their neighbours; by the abuse of their power, it is just with God to make them a terror to their neighbours by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment. Tyre had caused her terror, ver. 17. and now is made a terrible example. (2.) It shall be a *great affliction* to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow, ver. 17. they shall take up a lamentation for Tyre, as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, there was no such lamentations for it, as it was *nothing to them that passed by*, Lam. i. 12. but when Tyre the trading city fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts lament

the loss of great men more than the loss of good men. (3.) It shall be a loud alarm of them. *They shall tremble in the day of thy fall*, because they shall have reason to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall who can stand? *Howl fir-trees, if such a cedar be shaken*. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. Others death or decay in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved.

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink, *when I shall set glory in the land of the living*, ver. 20. Note, The holy land is the *land of the living*; for none but holy souls are properly living souls; where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the *land of the living* is: there David hoped to see the *goodness of the Lord*, Psal. xxvii. 13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the *land of the living*. 2. Though this *land of the living* may for a time lay under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that is departed shall return; and the restoration of what they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the glory of the lands, that are the *lands of the living*. 3. It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the *land of the living*. When the rich man was himself in torment, he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the *land of the living*.

C H A P. XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter we have, (1.) A large account, of the dignity, wealth, and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations, ver. 1—25. which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable. (2.) A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into, ver. 26—36. And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and by setting the one over against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleasures, of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them, or to be confident of the continuance of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre; 3. And say unto Tyre, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the LORD GOD; O Tyre, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty. 4. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas; thy builders have perfected thy beauty. 5. They have made all thy ship boards of fir-trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. 6. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim. 7. Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt, was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Eliphah was that which covered thee. 8. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyre, that were in thee, were thy pilots. 9. The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof, were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandize. 10. They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness. 11. The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect. 12. Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. 14. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules. 15. The men of Dedan were thy merchants; in many isles were the merchandize of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony. 16. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. 18. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19. Dan also and Javan going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. 20. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. 21. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in thee were they thy merchants. 22. The

22. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants; they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23. Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Ashur, and Chilmad, were thy merchants. 24. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and brodered works, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. 25. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Here, 1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, ver. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay, yet the prophet must lament it, because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the most grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented, if they were not preparing for trouble. He must lament it, because its ruin is hastening on apace; it is sure, it is near, and though the prophet foretold it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it. Note, We ought to mourn for the miseries of other nations, as well as of our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

2. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord Jehovah, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, chap. xx. 6.

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride. *O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty*, ver. 3. of universal beauty; so the word is, every way accomplished, and therefore every where admired. Zion that had the beauty of holiness, is called indeed the perfection of beauty, Psalm l. 2. that is the beauty of the Lord. But Tyre, because well built, and well filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves by the pomp and pleasure they live in, and to call themselves beauties for the sake of them. And if in these they excel others, to think themselves perfect. But God takes notice of the vain conceit men have of themselves in their prosperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often for the humbling of the spirit finds ways to bring down the state. Let none reckon themselves beautified any further than they are sanctified, nor say they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament; the prophet accordingly praiseth Tyre, for all that she had that was praise-worthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed, or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who looks upon every one that is proud, and abaseth them; hides them in the dust together, and binds their faces in secret, Job xl. 12.

3. The city of Tyre was advantageously situated, at the entry of the sea, ver. 3. having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities seated on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the east end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant ports; so that she became a merchant for the people for many isles: lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts. The borders are in the heart of the seas, ver. 4. It was surrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; the darling of the sea, laid in its bosom, in its heart. Note, It is a great convenience upon many accounts to live in an island; seas are the most ancient land-mark, not which our fathers have set, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other land-marks may, not so easily got over. The people so situated may the easier dwell alone, if they please; as not reckoned among the nations; and yet, if they please, may the easier traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own, that he who determines the bounds of men's habitation has determined well for us.

2. It was certainly built, according as the fashion then was; and being a city on a hill it made a glorious shew, and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports, ver. 4. Thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have to improve in architecture, that nothing appears in the buildings of Tyre that can be found fault with: and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord doth and will build up his Jerusalem.

2. It had its haven replenished with abundance of gallant ships, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The ship-carpenters did their part, as well as the house-carpenters their's. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; however they improved it, and brought it to as great a perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadstone. (1.) They made the boards or planks for the hull of the ship of fir-trees fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, Cant. iv. 8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak. (2.) They had cedars from Lebanon, another mountain of Israel, for their masts, ver. 5. (3.) They had oaks from Bashan, Isa. ii. 13. to make oars of; for it is probable their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timbers for shipping: Thus one country useth what another produceth, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot say to each other, I have no need of thee. (4.) Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships, that they made the very benches of ivory, which they fetched from the isles of Chittim, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or Assyrians to make them; so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be. (5.) So very prodigal were they that they made their sails of fine linen fetched from Egypt, and that embroidered too, ver. 7. Or it may be meant of their flags, which they hoisted to notify what city they belonged to, which were very costly. The word signifies a banner as well as a sail. (6.) They hung those rooms on ship-board with blue and purple, the richest clothes and richest colours they could get from the isles they traded with. For though Tyre was itself famous for purple, which is therefore called the Tyrian dye, yet they must have that which was far-fetched.

4. These gallant ships were well manned, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships that had command in their fleets were of their own city; such as they could put a confidence in, ver. 8. Thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee were thy pilots: But for common sailors, they had them from other countries; the inhabitants of Arvad and Sidon were thy mariners; these came from cities near them, Sidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off to the northward; there they bred able

seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime power to support, and give all the countenance they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for calkers or strengtheners of the clefts, or chinks, to stop them when the ships come home after long voyages to be repaired. To do this they had the ancients and wise men, ver. 9. For there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay, than to build anew: In public matters there is occasion for the ancients and wise men to be the repairers of the breaches and the restorers of paths to dwell in. Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, or to set their youth apprentices in Tyre, or put them on board their fleets; so that all the ships in the sea with their mariners were ready to occupy thy merchandise. Those that give good wages shall have hands at command.

5. Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, ver. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary they should have a good army on foot, and therefore took those of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service; though they had them from afar (which perhaps was their policy) from Persia, Lud and Phut. These bore their arms when there was occasion; and in time of peace, hanged up the shield and buckler in the armory, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them: but that they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them. Their walls were guarded by the men of Arvad, their towers were garrisoned by the Gammadims, robust men, that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the vulgar Latin renders it pigmies, men no longer than one's arm. They hung their shields upon the walls in their magazines, or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them, seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. Thus they set forth thy comeliness, ver. 10. and made thy beauty perfect, ver. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre, that it had those of all nations about in its service, except of the land of Israel, (though it lay next them) which furnished them with timber, but we do not find it furnished them with men; that would have entrenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18. Also that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay: and such an armory, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, Cant. iv. 4. It is observable, that there and here the armories are said to be furnished with shields and helmets, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive: though it is probable there were such; to intimate, that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection; and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to secure their own right, not encroach upon the rights of others.

6. They had a vast trade, and a correspondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they deal with in one commodity and some in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations named together, as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Gen. x. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of; and concerning many of them their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty; it is well it is not material; modern surveys come short of explaining the ancient geography. And therefore we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry, either concerning the traders, or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

1. We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little of his own knowledge concerning the trade of Tyre; he was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young; there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre, as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there; by which it appears that he was divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, ver. 3.

2. This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us, that God's eye is upon men, and he takes cognisance of what they do, when they are employed in their worldly business; not only when they are at church praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon exchange, buying and selling: which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep conscience void of offence; and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us.

3. We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness as the common father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity, and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity, or to the comfort and ornament of human life. *Non omnis fert omnia tellus*. Providence dispenseth its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has made of one blood, though they are made to dwell on all the face of the earth, Acts xvii. 26. Let every nation therefore thank God for the products of its country, though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

4. See what a blessing trade and merchandise is to mankind, especially when it is followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage but to a common benefit. *The earth is full of God's riches*, Psalm civ. 24. There is a multitude of all kinds of riches in it, as it is here, ver. 12. gathered off its surface and digged out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them; now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves, yet have reason to thank God for tradesmen and merchants, by whom the products of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

5. Besides the necessities that are here traded in, see what abundance of things are here mentioned that only serve to please fancy, and are valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them and trade in them, and part with those things for them which we can spare, that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are horns of ivory and ebony, ver. 15. that are brought for a present, i. e. exposed to sale and offered in exchange, or as some think presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are emeralds, coral, and agate, ver. 16. all precious stones and gold, ver. 22. which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are to please the state and smell the chief of all spices, ver. 22. cassia and calamus, ver. 19. and for ornament, purple, brodered work, and fine linen, ver. 16. Precious clothes for chariots, ver. 20. Blue clothes, (which Tyre was famous for) brodered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, ver. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, what a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortable without?

6. It is observable that Judah and the *land of Israel* were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly in *wheat*, a substantial commodity and necessary; *wheat of Minnith and Pannag*, two countries in Canaan famous for the best wheat, as some think; the whole land indeed was a *land of wheat*, Deut. viii. 8. it had *the fat of kidneys of wheat*, Deut. xxxii. 14. Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel: they traded likewise in *honey and oil*, and *balm*, or *rosin*; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple-commodities of, was that which was the *glory of all lands*, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and precious stones; and the Israel of God must reckon themselves well provided for if they have food convenient; for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God, will not set their hearts on the *delights of the sons and daughters of men*, or the *treasures of kings and provinces*. We find indeed that the New Testament Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, Rev. xviii. 12, 13. For notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.

7. Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place and exporting them to another; yet manufacture trades were not neglected. The *wares of their own making*, and a *multitude of such wares* are here spoken of, ver. 16. and again, ver. 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft tradesmen: for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad *wares of their own making*; which may bring them in the *multitude of all riches*.

8. All this made Tyre very great and very proud. *The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy markets*, ver. 25. i. e. thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for *thou wast replenished in wealth and number of people*, wast beautiful and made *very glorious in the midst of the seas*. These that grow very rich are cried up as *very glorious*; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, Geni: xxxi. 1.

26. ¶ Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. 27. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. 28. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. 29. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; 30. And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: 31. And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. 32. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyre, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? 33. When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. 34. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths, of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall. 35. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be fore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. 36. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more.

We have seen Tyre flourishing, here we have Tyre falling; and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states sooner or later have their day to come down; they have their period; and when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline; but the destruction of Tyre was sudden. *Her sun went down at noon*. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself, and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

1. How the ruin of Tyre will be brought about, ver. 26. She is a great ship richly laden, that is split or sunk by the indiscretion of her steermen, *Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters*; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans, which was the ruin of their state; by their insolence, by some affront given to the Chaldeans, or some attempt made upon them in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to that degree that he determined the ruin of their state; and *like an east-wind, broke them in the midst of the seas*. Note, It is ill with the people when those that sit at the stern instead of putting them into the harbour run them aground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, *her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise*, ver. 27. all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, they shall all fall with her into the midst of the seas in the day of her ruin. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them, and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; *happy therefore are they that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God*, who lives for ever.

3. What sad lamentations would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how ill they have played their cards, and how much they have contributed to their own ruin shall cry out so loud as to make even the suburbs shake, ver. 28. such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own ill conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come

down from their respective posts, ver. 29. and they shall cry out against thee, as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out, as they thought thou hadst been; they shall cry bitterly, for the common ruin and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall cast dust on their heads, in indignation of themselves, shall wallow themselves in ashes, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall make themselves bald, ver. 31. with tearing their hair: and according to the custom of great mourners, they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, who used to wear fine linen; and instead of merry songs, they shall weep with bitterness of heart. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure, and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity, ver. 32, 33. She that was Tyre the renowned, shall now be called *Tyris the destroyed in the midst of the sea*. What city is like Tyre? Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity, to such a depth of adversity? Time was when thy wares, those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, went forth out of the seas, and were exported to all parts of the world, then thou filledst many people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth and their kingdoms. The Tyrians, though they bore such a sway in trade, yet it seems were fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live but thrive by them. All that dealt with them were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with the multitude of thy merchandise. But now they that used to be enriched by them shall be ruined with thee, as is usual in trade; ver. 34. When thou shalt be broken, and all thou hast is seized on, all thy company shall fall too. There is an end of Tyre that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some and laughter to others, accordingly as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be fore afraid, and shall be troubled, ver. 35. concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall hiss at her, ver. 36, shall ridicule her pride and vanity and ill conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in her's. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, men also shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place, Job xxvii. 22, 23. Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?

C H A P. XXVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A prediction of the full and ruin of the king of Tyre, who in the destruction of that city is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows, ver. 1-10. (2.) A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity, ver. 11-19. (3.) A prophecy of the destruction of Zidon, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it, ver. 20-25. (4.) A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours, ver. 24, 25, 26.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me saying, 2. Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyre, Thus saith the Lord God: because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: 3. Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee. 4. With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5. By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; 7. Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. 9. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God: but thou shalt be a man and no God in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

We had done with Tyre in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyre is to be singled out from the rest; here is something to be said to him by himself; a message to him from God, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

1. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, chap. xxvii. 3. and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that God resists the proud. Let us see,

(1.) What were the expressions of his pride. His heart was lifted up, ver. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; and out of the abundance of the pride of his heart, he said, *I am a god*: he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes *they are gods*, Psal. lxxii. 6. But it doth not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is God alone, and will not give his glory to another. He thought the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him, as the world has upon the God that made it; and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have as much wisdom and strength as God himself, and as incontestible an authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute, and his word as much a law as the word of God. He challenged divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be deified among other heroes, after his death, as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylon said, *I will be like the most High*, Isa. xiv. 14. not like the most Holy. *I am the strong God*, and therefore will not be contradicted, because I cannot be controlled, *I sit in the seat of God*: I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his; *Divisum imperium cum Jove Caesar habet*. I sit as safe as God, as safe in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven.

He thinks his guards of men of war about his throne as pompous and potent as the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality, and since he needs to be told, he shall be told that self-evident truth, *thou art a man, and not God*, a depending creature, a dying creature, *thou art flesh and not spirit*, Isa. xxxi. 3. Note, Men must be made to know that they are *but men*, Psal. ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest saints, are *men and not gods*; Jesus Christ was with God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court, with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god by his poets, yet after all he is *but a man*, he knows it, he fears it; but he *sets his heart as the heart of God*, has conceited thyself to be a god, hast compared thyself with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong, and as fit to govern the world as he. It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be *as gods*, Gen. iii. 5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves as their own masters to do what they will, and their own carvers, to have what they will, their own end to live to themselves, and their own felicity to enjoy themselves, *set their hearts as the heart of God*, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown, a presumption that cannot go unpunished.

2. We are here told what it was that he was proud of.

1. His wisdom. It is likely this prince of Tyre was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, however a politician, and had a great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself *wiser than Daniel*, ver. 3. We found before that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevalency in prayer, chap. xiv. 14. Here we find he was famous for his prudence in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so as that he was become *wise to a proverb*. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god, he saith he is *wiser than Daniel*. *There is no secret that they can hide from thee*. Probably he challenged all about him to *prove him with questions*, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him; he had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes, and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that no thought could be withholden from him; therefore he said, *I am a god*. Note, *Knowledge puffeth up*; it is hard to know too much, and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was *wiser than Daniel* was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble, and to evidence that they are so.

2. His wealth. That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that *by his wisdom* he searched into the arcana either of nature or government, modelled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning, but his *wisdom and understanding* were of use to him in *traffic*; as some of the kings of Judah *loved husbandry*, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. so the king of Tyre loved *merchandise*, and by it he *got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver*, ver. 4, 5. See what the wisdom of this world is, those are cried up as the wisest men that know how to get money, and by right or wrong to raise estates, and yet really *this their way is their folly*, Psal. xlix. 13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre, (1.) That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself, and not to the providence of God, forgetting him who *gave him power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 17, 18. (2.) That he therefore thought himself a *wise man*, because he was a *rich man*; whereas a fool may have an estate, Eccles. ii. 19. yea, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, *when bread is not to the wise*, Eccles. ix. 11. (3.) That *his heart was lifted up because of his riches*; for the increase of his wealth that made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and that *set his heart as the heart of God*. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, *shewed himself as a god*, 2 Thess. ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world have therefore need to charge that upon themselves, which the word of God charged upon them, *that they be not high-minded*, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

(2.) Since *pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*, he must tell him of that *destruction*, of that *fall*, which was now hastening on, as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God. Because thou hast pretended to be a god, ver. 6. therefore thou shalt not be long a man, ver. 7. Observe here,

1. The instruments of his destruction. *I will bring strangers upon thee*, the Chaldeans, whom we do not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, chap. xxxvii. If any of those nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it for old acquaintance sake, but these *strangers* will have none; they are people of a *strange language*, which the king of Tyre himself, as wise as he is, perhaps understands not. They are the *terrible of the nations*; it was an army made up of *many nations*, and it was at this day the most *formidable*, both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these he will bring upon the king of Tyre.

2. The extremity of the destruction. *They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom*, ver. 7. i. e. against all those things which thou gloriest in as thy beauty and the product of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that *their prey*, which we have made our *pride*. The king of Tyre's palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as *his brightness*, these he thinks make him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall *defile*, shall *deface*, shall *deform*; he thought them sacred things, that none durst touch, but the conquerors shall seize them as common things, and spoil the *brightness* of them. But whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is sacred; no, ver. 8. *They shall bring thee down to the pit, to the grave*; thou shalt *die the death*. And, (1.) It shall not be an *honourable death*, but an *ignominious* one. He shall be so *vilified* in his death as that he may despair of being *deified* after his death. He shall die the *deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas*, that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown overboard without any ceremony or mark of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is *like to be destroyed in the midst of the sea*, chap. xxxvii. 32. and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people. (2.) It shall not be a *happy death*, but a *miserable* one, he shall *die the death of the uncircumcised*, ver. 10. of those that are strangers to God and not in covenant with him, and therefore die under his wrath and curse. It is *death*, a double death, temporal and eternal, the death both of body and soul. He shall die the *second death*, that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death here passed upon the king of Tyre, is ratified by a divine authority. *I have spoken it, saith the Lord God*. And what he hath said he will do. None can *gain say* it, nor will he *un say* it.

3. The effectual disproof that this will be of all his pretensions to deity, Vol. II. No. CXXXVI.*

ver. 9. when the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and thou seest no way of escape, *Wilt thou then say, I am God?* Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thyself, and such a confidence in thyself, as thou now hast? No; thy being empowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not a god, but a weak, timorous, trembling, dying man. *In the hand of him that slayeth thee*, in the hand of God, and of the instruments that he employed, *thou shalt be a man, and not God*, utterly unable to resist and help thyself. *I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men*, Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7. Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death at farthest, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

11. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12. Son of man take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13. Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, and sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre, chap. xxvi. followed a parathetical lamentation for it, chap. xxvii. so after the ruin of the king of Tyre is foretold, it is bewailed.

1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre, spoken to, ver. 2. His name was Ethbaal, or Ithobalus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts an *accomplished* man, very great and famous, but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositions have suggested, that besides the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his merchandises, others to the angels, as that of being *in the holy mountain of God*. But if there be any thing mystical in it, (as perhaps there may) I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, ver. 13. *Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created*.

(2.) Some think by the *king of Tyre* is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram king of Tyre. The present governor is called *prince*, ver. 2. but he that is here lamented is called *king*. The court of Tyre and its kings had for many ages been famous: but sin ruins it.

Now we may observe two things here,

1. What was the *renown* of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, ver. 12—15. He was a *man*, but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mighty figure in his day. (1.) He far exceeded other men; Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king perhaps had not come short of any of them. *Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty*: both the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life, seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as the reason of men could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and the enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore *seal up the sum*, for nothing can be added: he is a complete man, *perfect in his genere*. (2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocency, ver. 13. *Thou hast been in Eden, even in the garden of God*, thou hast lived as it were in *paradise* all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of every thing that is *good for food, or pleasant to the eyes*; and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had. One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre is, that he *out-did* all other princes in jewels, which those have the most plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did. *Every precious stone was his covering*. There is a great variety of precious stones, that he had of *every sort*; and in such plenty, that besides what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes *trimmed with them*: they were his *covering*: nay, ver. 14. he *walked up and down in the midst of stones of fire*, i. e. these precious stones which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he *walked* in the midst of them, and then fancied himself as glorious, as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a *flame of fire*. And if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them *as bright as angels*, no wonder he is such an admirer of himself, as to think himself *as great as God*. Nine several sorts of precious stones are here named, which were all in the high-priest's ephod. Perhaps they are particularly named because he in his pride used to speak particularly of them and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure.

sure, this is such a precious stone; of such a value, and so and so are its virtues. Thus is he upbraided with his vanity: *Gold* is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to those *precious stones*; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise, was the curious music he had, the *tabrets and pipes*, hand-instruments and wind-instruments; the *workmanship* of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared in thee, the pronoun is feminine, in thee, O Tyre; or it notes that the king was effeminate in doting on such things. They were prepared in the day he was created, i. e. either born or created king: they were made on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day or his coronation-day. These he prided himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them. (3.) He looked like an incarnate angel, ver. 14. *Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth, or protecteth: i. e.* He looked upon himself as a guardian angel to his people, so bright, so strong, so faithful; appointed to their office and qualified for it; anointed kings should be to their subjects, as anointed cherubims that cover them with the wings of their power; and when they are such God will own them; their advancement was from him, *I have set thee so*. Some think because mention was made of Eden, that refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover it, Gen. iii. 24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders, as that angel was for his charge. Or it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings covered the ark, he thought himself as bright as one of them. (4.) He appeared in as much splendour as the high-priest when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty. *Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God*, as president of the temple built on that holy mountain; thou didst look as great and with as much majesty and authority as ever the high-priest did when he walked in the temple which was garnished with precious stones, 2 Chron. iii. 6. and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast, and on the shoulders; in that he seemed to walk in the midst of the stones of fire. Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at least he thinks himself so.

2. Let us now see what was the ruin of the king of Tyre; what it was that stained his glory, and laid all his honours in the dust, ver. 15. *Thou wast perfect in thy ways*, i. e. Thou didst prosper in all thy affairs, and every thing went well with thee; thou hast not only a clear, but a bright reputation, from the day thou wast created, the day of thine accession to the throne, till iniquity was found in thee; and that spoiled all. This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, both which were perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them. And when iniquity was once found in him, it increased, he grew worse and worse, as appears, ver. 18. *Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries*, i. e. Thou hast lost the benefit of all that thou thoughtest sacred, and in which, as in a sanctuary, thou thoughtest to take refuge: these thou hast defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thine iniquities. Now observe,

1. What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. (1.) The iniquity of his traffick, so it is called, ver. 18. both his and his people's, for their sin is charged upon him, because he connived at it, and set them an ill example, ver. 16. *By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence*, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to right those that suffered wrong, and to protect them from violence; nay, in the multiplicity of business wrong was done to man, by oversight; and in his dealings he made use of his power to invade the rights of those he dealt with. Note, Those that have much to do in the world are in great danger of doing much amiss; and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries; but too many make them mysteries of iniquity. (2.) His pride and vain-glory, ver. 17. *Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty*, thou wast in love with thyself, and thy own shadow. And thus thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness, and the pomp and splendor whereas thou livest. He gazed so much upon this, that it dazzled his eyes, and made him he could not see his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness, that it both lost him his wisdom, and lost him the reputation of it. He really became a fool in glorifying. Those make a bad bargain for themselves that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and to please a vain humour lose a real excellency.

2. What the ruin was that this iniquity brought him to. (1.) He was thrown out of his dignity, and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple, ver. 16. *I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God*. His kingly power was high as a mountain, setting him above others; it was a mountain of God, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred; but having abused his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and expelled; he disgraceth the crown he wears, and so has forfeited it, and shall be destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire, the precious stones with which his palace was garnished, as the temple was; and they shall be no protection to him. (2.) He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours. *I will cast thee to the ground*, ver. 17. *will cast thee among the pavement stones*, from the midst of the precious stones, and will lay thee a rueful spectacle before kings that they may behold thee, and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppressive. (3.) He was quite consumed; his city and he in it. *I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee*. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it and the palace particularly in ashes. Or it may be taken more generally for the fire of God's judgments, which shall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both to ashes upon the earth; and this fire shall be brought forth from the midst of thee. All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling. (4.) He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced in the fight of all them that behold him, ver. 18. *they that know him shall be astonished at him*, and shall admire how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem when it is destroyed, shall be an astonishment and a hissing, 2 Chron. vii. 20, 21. So fell the king of Tyre.

20. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophecy against it, 22. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. 23. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD. 24. And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house

of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them: and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD. 25. Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in the land that I have given to my servant Jacob. 26. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that defile them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their GOD.

God's glory is his great end, both in all the good and in all the evil which proceedeth out of the mouth of the most High; so we find in these verses, 1. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zidon; a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it, and stood and fell with it. God saith here, *I am against thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the midst of thee*, ver. 22. And again, they that would not know by gentler methods shall be made to know that I am the Lord, and I alone; and that I am a just and jealous God, when I shall have executed judgments in her, destroying judgments, when I shall have done execution according to justice, and according to the sentence passed, and so shall be sanctified in her. The Zidonians, it should seem, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who being men of business and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition; the Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaron; Solomon introduced it, 1 Kings xi. 5. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel, 2 Kings xvi. 31. so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now saith he, *I will be glorified, I will be sanctified*. The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him and have learned to glorify him; but instead of that he seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. Note, When God is sanctified he is glorified; for his holiness is his glory; and those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by, he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by executing judgments upon them, which speak him a just avenger of his own and his people's injured honour.

The judgments that shall be executed upon Zidon are war and pestilence; two wasting depopulating judgments, ver. 23. They are God's messengers which he sends on his errands, and they shall accomplish that for which he sends them. Pestilence and blood shall be sent into her streets, there the dead bodies of those shall lie who perished some by the plague, occasioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city is taken and all put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be judged, when they are dying of their wounds they shall judge themselves, and others shall say they justly fall; or as some read it, *they shall be punished by the sword*, that sword which has commission to destroy on every side. It is God that judgeth, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would execute judgments, but all those that despise his people Israel and triumphed in their calamities, ver. 26. for this was now God's controversy with the nations that were round about them, ver. 26. Note, When God's people are under his correcting hand for their faults, he takes care, as he did concerning malefactors, that were scourged, that they shall not seem vile to those that are about them, and therefore takes it ill at those who despise them, and so help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, Zech. i. 15. God regards them even in their low estate, and therefore let not men despise them.

2. God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, Isa. lii. 5. but God will now both cure them of their sins and ease them of their troubles, and so will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, ver. 25. For,

1. They shall return to the possession of their own land again. *I will gather the house of Israel*, out of their dispersions, in answer to that prayer, Psal. cvi. 47. *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen*. And in pursuance of that promise, Deut. xxx. 4. thence will the Lord thy God gather thee. Being gathered, they shall be brought in a body to dwell in the land which I have given to my servant Jacob. God had an eye to the ancient grant in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a defeasance to the right. He that gave it will again give it.

2. They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that had been vexatious to them are taken off, they shall live in quietness; there shall be no more a pricking brier, or a grieving thorn, ver. 24. They shall have a happy settlement, for they shall build houses, and plant vineyards; and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there; they shall dwell safely, shall dwell with confidence, and there shall be none to disquiet them or make them afraid, ver. 26. This never had a full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity, they were ever and anon molested by some ill neighbour or other. Nor has the gospel church been ever quite free from pricking briars and grieving thorns; yet sometimes the church has rest, believers always dwell safely under the divine protection, and may be quiet from the fear of evil. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that offends shall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever banished.

C H A P. XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king, next follows four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them; Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it, and therefore whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophecies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the 10th year of the captivity, ver. 1. The 2d in the 27th, ver. 17. The 3d in the 11th year and the first month, chap. xxx. 20. The 4th in the 11th year and the third month, chap. xxxi. 1. The 5th in the 12th year, chap. xxxii. 1. and another the same year, ver. 17. In this chapter we have, (1.) The destruction of Pha-

raah foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel, ver. 1—7. (2.) The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold, ver. 8—12. (3.) A promise of the restoration thereof in part after forty years, ver. 13—16. (4.) The possession that should be given to Nebuchadnezzar, of the land of Egypt, ver. 17—20. (5.) A promise of mercy to Israel, ver. 21.

1. **I**N the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3. Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. 4. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. 5. And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee, and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open field; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Here is, (1.) The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the tenth year of the captivity, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his service against Tyre; and therefore the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem and raise the siege, Jer. xxxvii. 5. but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failing of all our creature-confidences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them; that we may *escape from man*.

2. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against *Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt*, ver. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it began to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince not long after this.

3. The prophecy itself: Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the present Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a *great dragon*, or crocodile, that *lies in the midst of his rivers*, as Leviathan in the waters, to *play therein*, ver. 3. Nilus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles: And what is the king of Egypt in God's account but a *great dragon*, venomous and mischievous. Therefore, saith God, *I am against thee, I am above thee*; so it may be read. How high forever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a *higher than they*, Eccl. v. 8. a God above them that can controul them, and if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God *against* them, that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He *lies in the midst of his rivers*, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures: And he saith, *My river is my own*; he boasts that he is an absolute prince, his subjects are his vassals, Joseph bought them long ago, Gen. xlvii. 23. That he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in the government nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his own, and none of his neighbours has any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in their property, forgetting that whatever we have, we have only the use of it, the property is in God, we ourselves are not our own but his; our tongues are not *our own*, Psal. xii. 4. Our river is not *our own*, for its springs are in God. The most potent prince cannot call what he has his own, for though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd; *my river is my own, for I have made it for myself*. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author and end of his own being and felicity: He only, that is the great Creator, can say of this world, and of every thing in it, *I have made it for myself*. He calls his river his own, because he *looks not unto the maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago*, Isa. xlii. 11. What we have, we have received from God, and must use for God, so that we cannot say we made it, much less that we made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, ver. 4, 5. (1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a *hook and a cord* for this *leviathan*, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can, Job xii. 1. *I will bring thee out of the midst of thy rivers*; will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency and placest such a confidence. Herodotus relates this of Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for 25 years, and was so elevated with his successes, that he said *God himself could not cast him out of his kingdom*; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended upon shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy.

(2.) *All his fish* shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had dependence on him; as he thought, but really such as he had a dependence upon; these shall *stick to his scales*, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, (3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be *meat to the beasts and fowls*, ver. 5. Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh in defence of Aricius king of Lybia, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army and went out against the Cyrenians

to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom, that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left *thrown into the wilderness*, he and *all the fish of the river* with him. Thus issues men's pride and presumption, and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they might call their own under God when they call it their own *against* him.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people, they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them, ver. 6, 7. *because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel*; they pretended to be a staff for them to lean upon, but when any stress was laid upon them, they were either weak, and could not, or treacherous, and would not, do that for them that was expected. They *broke under them*, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they *rent their shoulder*, and made all their loins to be at a stand. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which when he failed to do to any purpose, it could not but put them into a great consternation. God had told them long since that the Egyptians were broken reeds, *Isaiah xxx. 6, 7*. Rabshakeh had told them so, *Isaiah xxxvi. 6*. and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But this is no excuse at all for the Egyptians falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is and will be the avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust and ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

8. ¶ Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate, and waste; and they shall know that I am the LORD, because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. 10. Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene, even unto the border of Ethiopia. 11. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste, shall be desolate forty years, and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 13. Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; at the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: 13. And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them again to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation, and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. 16. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is the prophecy,

1. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them is their pride, ver. 9. they said, *The river is mine, and I have made it*; therefore their land shall spue them out. (1.) God is against them, both against the king and against the people, *against thee and against thy rivers*; waters signify *peoples and multitudes*, Rev. xvii. 15. 2. Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy *both man and beast*, the sword of a civil war. (3.) The country shall be *desolated*. The land of Egypt shall be *desolate and waste*, ver. 9. the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. *It shall be utterly waste; wastes of waste* (so the margin reads it) and *desolate*, ver. 10. *neither man nor beast shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited*, ver. 11. it shall be *desolate in the midst of the countries that are so*, ver. 12. This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them; it shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, *from the tower of Syene even into the border of Ethiopia*. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. (4.) The people shall be *dispersed* and scattered among the nations, ver. 12. so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hands shall now become a contemptible people. Such a fall doth a *haughty spirit go before*.

2. Of the restoration of Egypt after a while, ver. 13. Egypt shall lie *desolate forty years*, ver. 12. and *I will bring again the captivity of Egypt*, ver. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished, (1.) That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to *return to the land of their habitation*, and give them a settlement there again, ver. 14. Note, though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever, no, not with them in this world. (2.) That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a *kingdom* again, but it shall be the *basest of the kingdoms*, ver. 15. it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but to humble it it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified.

(1.) That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not *exalt itself above the nations, nor rule over the nations* as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations will find out

out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own but other nations.

(2.) That it may not deceive the people of God, *ver.* 16: *It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel*, they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that *brings their iniquity to remembrance*, i. e. provokes God to punish them, not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or it puts them in mind of their idolatries to return to them, *when they look to the idolatries*, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in, are oftentimes therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once gave Egypt for their ransom, Isaiah xliii. 3. will now give Egypt for their cure; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed: God doth not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, break those creature-stays which we stay too much upon; and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.

17. ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey, and it shall be the wages for his army. 20. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD. 21. ¶ In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapter; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquest of the Ammonites and Moubites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenceans, and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished: and just at the end of the siege of Tyre, God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him that utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is laid here that all the prophecies against Egypt, might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophrah foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, *Jer.* xlii. 30. The general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold, *Jer.* xliii. 10. Observe,

1. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him *that land*, that he might *take the spoil and prey* for it, *ver.* 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it was very inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves no doubt gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. *En! quo discordia cives per duxit miseris.* Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a recompense to him for the *hard service* with which he had caused his army to serve against Tyre, *ver.* 18, 19, 20. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea between Tyre and the continent was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, *every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled*, with carrying burdens and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is hardly subdued. Those that have much to do in the world, find some affairs to go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But (2.) In this service God owns that they wrought for him, *ver.* 20. He set them at work for the humbling of a proud city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and ill men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully doth God over-rule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had *no wages*, nor his army. He was at a vast expence to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ships their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. Therefore (4.) He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his services against Tyre. Note, God will be behind hand with none for any service they do for him, but one way or other will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought. The service done for him by worldly men with worldly designs shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants that have a sincere regard to his will and glory would not be

put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it praying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them; *verily they have their reward.* Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's *full reward*, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he became master of that he became the *head of gold*.

3. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was in the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he run mad, *Dan.* iv. was so seven years; and within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was at the highest, Israel was at the lowest, then were they at the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth, *ver.* 28. The day of their deliverance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage; in the honour that shall be done. (1.) To their princes; that are the horns of the house of Israel, the seat of their glory and power, these began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon: Daniel sat in the gate of the city; Shadrach, Mejhach, and Abednego were set over the affairs of the province, *Dan.* ii. 49. these were all of the king's seed, and of the princes, *Dan.* i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquest of Egypt, that they were thus preferred; and soon after three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel. And some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, *Jer.* lii. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens. (2.) To their prophets. And I will give thee the opening of the mouth. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies after this are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlargeth the liberties of his ministers, and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter, we have (1.) A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadnezzar. In which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her interests and concerns, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in the pushing on this destruction, *ver.* 1—19. (2.) A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it began by their own ill conduct, which gradually weakened them and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, *ver.* 20—26. It is all much to the same purpose with what we had before.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Howl ye, Woe worth the day. 3. For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. 4. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. 5. Ethiopia and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. 6. Thus saith the LORD. They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. 7. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. 8. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh. 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. 11. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken it. 13. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. 15. And I will pour out my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. 16. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent afunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. 17. The young men of Aven and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity. 18. At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt:

Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as in the general very frightful. What can protect a provoking people, when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

1. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; ver. 2, 3. *Howl ye, you may justly shriek now it is coming, for you will be made to shriek and make hideous out-cries when it comes. Cry out, Woe, worth the day, or ah the day, alas because of the day: the terrible day, Woe and alas! for the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long deferred. It is the day of the Lord, the day in the which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance; you have your day now, when you carry all before you and trample on all about you, but God will have his day now shortly; the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment, Psalm xxxvii. 13. It will be a cloudy day; that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm; fire and brimstone and horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, i. e. of reckoning with the heathen, for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spoke of when God would pour out his fury upon the heathen, Psalm lxxix. 6. when they should sink, Psalm ix. 15.*

2. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. (1.) Egypt herself shall fall, ver. 4. The sword shall come upon Egypt, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? they shall take away her multitude; is it strong and well fixed? Her foundation shall be broken down, and then the fabric, though built never so fine, never so high, will fall of course. (2.) Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her; when the slain fall so thick in Egypt, great pain shall be in Ethiopia, both that in Africa, which is on the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side; when their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but apprehend their own in danger; nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword, ver. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya, Cush, and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham, who are mentioned, and Mizraim, that is Egypt between them, Gen. x. 6. The Lydians that were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, Jer. xvi. 9. These shall fall with Egypt and Chub; the Chaldeans, the inhabitants of the inner Libya; these and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries that upon some account or other resided in Egypt; as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, Acts iii. 25. the children of the promise, Gal. iv. 28. These sojourned in Egypt, contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them. Note, They that will take their lot with God's enemies shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

3. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt shall come down under her, shall come down with her, ver. 6. They that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. (1.) Doth Egypt think herself upheld by the absolute authority and dominion of her king? the pride of her power shall come down, ver. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken and humbled. (2.) Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene; which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall enter. Both the countries and the cities, the husbandmen and the merchants, shall be desolate, ver. 7. as before, chap. xxix. 12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, ver. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, ver. 11. (3.) Is the river Nile her support, and the several channels of it a defence to her? I will make the rivers dry, ver. 12. so that those natural fortifications which were thought impregnable, because impassable, shall stand them in no stead. (4.) Are her idols a support to her? Those shall be destroyed, those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers and strongholds. Ver. 13. I will cause their images to cease out of Noph. (5.) Is her royal family her support? There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt, the royal family shall be extirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long. (6.) Is her courage her support, and doth she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men of war, who have now of late been inured to service? That shall fail, I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. (7.) Is the rising generation her support? is she upheld by her children? and doth she think herself happy because she hath her quiver full of them? Alas, the young men shall fall by the sword, ver. 17. and the daughters shall go into captivity, ver. 18. and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes.

4. God shall inflict these desolating judgments on Egypt; ver. 8. They shall know that I am the Lord, and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have set a fire in Egypt. The fire that consumes a nation is of God's kindling; and when he sets fire to a people, all their helpers shall be destroyed; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, ver. 15, 16. Neither its strength nor its multitude can stand in any stead.

5. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction. The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, ver. 10. They that undertook to protect Israel from the king of Babylon, shall not be able to protect themselves. It is said of the Chaldeans who should destroy Egypt, (1.) That they are strangers, ver. 12. who therefore shall shew no compassion for old acquaintance sake, but shall carry it strangely towards them. (2.) That they are the terrible of the nations, ver. 11. both in respect of force and in respect of fierceness; and being terrible they shall make terrible work. (3.) That they are the wicked; who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature, or the laws of nations, for they are without law. I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked. They do violence unjustly, wicked as they are, yet so far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another; and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, *jure belli*, for God sells it into their hands.

6. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; the sword shall go

through the land. Divers places are here named: Pathros, Zoan, and Noph, ver. 14. Sin and Noph, ver. 15, 16. Avon and Phibeseth, ver. 17. Te-haphneches, ver. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily: their day shall be darkened, their honours, comforts, and hopes, shall be extinguished; their yokes shall be broken, so that they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them; a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen, or shine further. And lastly, the Ethiopians that are at a distance from them, as well as those that are mingled with them, shall share in their pain and terror: God will by his providence spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopian shall be made afraid, ver. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure: fearfulness shall when he pleases surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, (1.) The land of Egypt mortified. Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt, ver. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regularly and legally, by a judicial sentence. All the executions God doth are according to his judgments. (2.) The God of Israel herein glorified, they shall know that I am the Lord. The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

20. ¶ And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt: and lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. 25. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The short prophecy of the weakening of the power of Egypt, was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in their enterprises, and returned *re infecta*; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable. That of Babylon was but lately arrived to its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria: Now it is with them as it is with families and states, some are growing up, others are declining and going back: one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

1. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to help either himself or his friend. (1.) This was in part done already, ver. 21. I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken, when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish, Jer. xli. 2. and made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. Egypt had been long in gathering strength, and extending its dominions, and therefore that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loseth its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Egypt slew good king Josiah, and in the same reign, that its arm was thus broken, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt's heart and neck were broke, its arm was; God's judgments come upon a people by steps, that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken, it shall not be bound up to be healed, for none can heal the wounds that God gives but he himself. Those whom he disfirms, whom he disables, cannot again hold the sword. (2.) This was to be done again, one arm was broken before, and something was done towards the setting of it, towards the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the breast. But now, ver. 22. I am against Pharaoh, and will break both his arms; both the strong, and that which was broken and set again. Note, If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will cause the sword to fall out of his hand, which he caught hold of as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated, ver. 24. I will break Pharaoh's arms. He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God formerly, and of late, the staff of a broken rod to them; and now God by breaking his arms reckons with him for both. God justly breaks that power which is abused either to put wrongs upon people, or to put cheats upon them. But this is not all: (1.) The king of Egypt shall be dispirited, when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon's forces, he shall groan before him with the groaning of a deadly wounded man. Note, It is common for those that are most elevated in their prosperity, to be most dejected and disheartened in their adversity. Pharaoh, even before the sword toucheth him, shall groan as if he had received his death's wound. (2.) The people of Egypt shall be dispersed, ver. 23. and again, ver. 26. I will scatter them among the nations. Other nations had mingled with them, ver. 5. now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them; and so be made to know that the Lord is righteous.

2. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, ver. 24, 25. It is said and repeated that God will, (1.) Put strength into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. (2.) That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a com-

mission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt. Note, As judges on the bench, like Pilate, John xix. 11, to generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

C H A P. XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of Pharaoh. In passing sentence upon great criminals, it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to direct and to justify the proceedings; Pharaoh stands indicted at the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be conquerable by any force; The prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. (1.) He must shew him how great a monarch the king of Assyria had been, what a vast empire he had, what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, as great as he was, could not go beyond him, ver. 3-9. (2.) He must then shew him, how like he was to the king of Assyria in pride and carnal security, ver. 10. (3.) He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations, and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, ver. 3-9. (4.) He must leave the king of Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own fate in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective glass of his ruin, ver. 18.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, Speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness? 2. ¶ Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. 4. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. 5. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. 6. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. 7. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches; for his root was by great waters: 8. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him; the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the chefnut-trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. 9. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches; so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before; when God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people, and put into the hands of those that hated them, Isa. ii. 22, 23. In this prophecy,

1. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; ver. 2. *Speak to Pharaoh, and to his multitude*, to the multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength; these he was proud of; these he put confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, *Whom art thou like in thy greatness?* We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison: Those that think highly of themselves fancy themselves as great and as good as such and such that have been highly celebrated: The flatterers and princes tell them, whom they equal in pomp and grandeur: Well, saith God, let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness, and no way inferior to him; but let him pitch upon whom he will, he will find that his day came to fall: he will see there was an end of all his perfection, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner. Note, The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, are intended as admonitions to us not to be secure or high-minded, or to think we stand out of danger.

2. He is directed to shew him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness; and that was the Assyrian, ver. 3. whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod: Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins, or rather grafted upon its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, ver. 3. The glory of the house of David, is illustrated by the same similitude, chap. xvii. 3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, but refused to be promoted over the trees, because they would not leave their fruitfulness, Judges ix. 8. And therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and his top among the thick boughs; he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He surpassed all the princes in his neighbourhood, they were all shrubs to him. Ver. 5. His height was exalted above all the trees of the field, they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, ver. 8. The cedars, even those in the garden of Eden, where we may suppose were the best of the kind, would not hide him, but his top-branches outshot theirs.

2. He was a spreading cedar; his branches did not only run up in height, but run out in breadth; noting, that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influences much further. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth his branches to the sea, to the river, Psalm lxxx. 11. His boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, ver. 5. So that he had a shadowing shroud, ver. 3. This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was fair in his greatness, in the length of branches, ver. 7. very comely as well as very stately, fair by the multitude of his branches, ver. 9. His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of wise men, as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fig-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the chefnut trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, no tree in the garden of God, in Eden, in Babylon, for that stood where paradise was planted, there where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, Gen. ii. 9. there was none like to this cedar in beauty, i.e. in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and which every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtuously, but he excelled them all, out-shone them all. All the trees of Eden envied him, ver. 9. When they found they could not compare with him, they were angry and grieved that he so far out-did them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others, that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and who can stand before envy?

3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow; ver. 6. All the fowls of heaven, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs, where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The beasts of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches, where they were levant and couchant, where they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, under his shadow dwell all great nations: they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him, if he would undertake to protect them; as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come and trust in his shadow, Judges ix. 15. But the utmost severity that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself can give, is but like the shadow of a tree, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed; Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and the stateliest cedar, Psalm xvii. 8.—xci. 4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in his greatness and power. For, (1.) It was God that made him fear, ver. 9. For by him kings reign: he was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth; and therefore we must not envy them; yet will not that secure the continuance of their prosperity; for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into deformity. (2.) He seemed to have a good bottom; this cedar was not like the heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places, Jer. xvii. 6. it was not a root in a dry ground, Isaiah liii. 2. No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur, ver. 4. The waters made him great, he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as the deep that set him up on high, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs and crown-rents, which were as rivers running round about his plants; these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests every where, for he sent out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field to water them, and when they had maintenance from the king's palace, Ezra iv. 14. and their country was nourished by the king's country, Acts xii. 20. they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great riches, find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers, for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them; and the more men have, the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long, because of the multitude of waters which fed them, ver. 5. and ver. 7. his root was by great waters, which seems to secure it that its leaf should never wither, Psalm i. 3. that it should not see when heat comes, Jer. xvii. 8. Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, Job i. 7. Psalm xxxvii. 33.

19. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; 11. I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. 12. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: 14. To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither the trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. 15. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave, I caused a mourning; I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit; and all

all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. 17. They also went down into hell with him unto them *that be slain with the sword*; and *they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen*. 18. ¶ To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with *them that be slain by the sword*. This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Assyria in pomp and power and prosperity; how like he was to him in his greatness; now here we see,

1. How he doth likewise resemble him in his pride, ver. 10. for as face answers to face in a glass, so doth one corrupt carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome, are fatal to many others too. *Thou, O king of Egypt, hast lifted up thyself in height*, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, chap. xxx. 3. And just so he, i. e. the king of Assyria, when he had *shot up his top among the thick boughs*, his heart was presently *lifted up in his height*, and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at distance, and trampled upon his people: witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvi. 4. How haughtily doth he speak of himself and his own achievements, how scornful of that great and good man? There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particularly that of oppressing God's people; it is charged upon them both together, Isa. lii. 4. but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was pride; for it is the contempt of the proud, that they are filled with. Note, When men's outward condition riseth, their minds commonly rise with it. And it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

2. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison,

1. Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, saith God, ver. 11. *I have therefore*, because he was thus lifted up, *delivered him into the hands of the mighty one of the heathen*. Cyaxares king of the Medes, in the twenty-sixth year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire: Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became very emphatically the *mighty one of the heathen*: most mighty among them, and most mighty over them, to prevail against them. (1.) It is God himself that orders his ruin; *I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner: I have driven him out*. Note, God is the judge who puts down one and sets up another, Psalm lxxvi. 7. And when he pleaseth he can extirpate and expel those who think themselves and seem to others to have taken deepest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against those they contended with, if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands. (2.) It is his own sin that procures his ruin. *I have driven him out for his wickedness*. None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. (3.) It is a mighty one of the heathen that shall be the instrument of his ruin. For God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. *He shall surely deal with him*, shall know how to manage him as great as he is. Note, Proud imperious men will sooner or later meet with their match.

Now in this history of the fall of the Assyrian. Observe,

1. A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far. But his day comes to fall. (1.) The stately cedar was crot; *the terrible of the nations cut him off*. Soldiers, who being both armed and commissioned to kill and slay, and to destroy, may well be reckoned among the terrible of the nations; they have lopped off his branches first; have seized upon some parts of his dominion, and forced them out of his hands: so that in all mountains and valleys of the nations about, in the high-lands and low-lands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were broken off from the Assyrian monarchy, that had been subject to it, but were either revolted or recovered from it. Its feathers were borrowed, and when every bird had fetched back its own, it was naked like the stump of a tree. (2.) It was deserted; *all the people of the earth, that had fled to him for shelter, are gone down from his shadow, and have left him*. When he was disabled to give them protection, they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them and have a dependence upon them, it is only for what they can get; when Providence frowns upon them, their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. (3.) It was insulted over, and its fall triumphed in; ver. 13. *Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar*. Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves over-stripped so much. *All the trees of Eden, that were cut down and fallen before him, all that drank water of the rain of heaven, as the stump of the tree that is left in the south, is said to be wet with the dew of heaven*, Dan. iv. 23. and to bud through the scent of water, Job xiv. 9. *They shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves*. *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*. But on the contrary, the trees of Lebanon, that are yet standing in their height and strength, mourned for him, and the trees of the field fainted for him, because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken*, for they cannot expect to stand long, Zech. xi. 2.

2. A reddition of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch and all his adherents and supporters; they are all delivered to death, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axe; he and his princes, who he said were *altogether kings*, go down to the grave, *to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men*, as common persons of no quality or distinction, *they die like men*, Psalm lxxii. 7. they were carried away with them that go down to the pit; and their pomp did neither protect them nor descend after them. Again, ver. 16. he was cast down to hell with them that descend into the pit; he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are in obscurity and oblivion. Again, ver. 17. *They all that were his arm, on whom he staid, by whom he acted and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave with him, unto them that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame*. When great men

fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

3. What God designed and aimed at in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, (1.) To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze, ver. 16. *I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall*; they were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, every one thinking his turn would be next. When he went down to the grave, ver. 15. *I caused a mourning, a general lamentation*, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king, in token of this general grief I covered the deep for him, put that into black, gave a stop to business in compliance to this universal mourning; *I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed*, that they might run in another channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, Rev. xviii. 9. *To the end that none of all the trees by the waters, though never so advantageously situated, may exalt themselves for their height, may be proud and conceited of themselves, and shoot up their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own policies and powers; as if they could never be brought down*. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him. Note, The fall of proud presumptuous men is intended for warning to others to keep humble. It had been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition.

2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt in like manner, ver. 18. He thought himself like the Assyrian in glory and greatness, overtopping all the trees of Eden, as the cypress doth the shrubs: but thou also shalt be brought down, with other trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. Thou shalt be brought to the grave, to the nether or lower parts of the earth, thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, that die in their uncleanness, die ingloriously, die under a curse and at a distance from God; then shall those whom he has trampled upon triumph over him, saying, *this is Pharaoh and all his multitude*. See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride is come to; here is all that is left of him. Note, Great men and great multitudes, with the great figure and great noise they make in the world, when God comes to contend with them, will soon become little, less than nothing: such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

C H A P. XXXII.

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt; which is wonderfully enlarged upon and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin, no less than six several prophecies at divers times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think surely there is some special reason for it. And, (1.) Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find, chap. xv. 14. that God determined to judge Egypt for oppressing his people; and though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet in this destruction here foretold, these old scores were reckoned for, and that was to have its full accomplishment. (2.) Perhaps it may look as far forward as the book of the Revelation, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel church, that makes war with the Lamb, is spiritually called Egypt, Rev. xi. 8. And if so the destruction of Egypt and its Pharaoh was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and betwixt this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt and the prophecy of the destruction of the antichristian generation there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter relating to Egypt, both in the same month, one in the first day, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the sabbath day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how lamentable the fall of Egypt should be, but to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two similitudes; (1.) The killing of a man or a whale, or some such devouring creature, ver. 1-16. (2.) The funeral of a great commander or captain-general, ver. 17-32. The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers, 3. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net. 4. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. 6. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimdest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. 7. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD. 9. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. 10. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall

shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. 12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them, and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. 13. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters: neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. 14. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD. 15. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the LORD. 16. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude; saith the Lord GOD.

Here, (1.) The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, ver. 2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and in order thereunto to be frequent in taking up lamentations for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not desired but dreaded the *woeful day*. Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God, must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries that sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may let them a weeping, set them a trembling.

2. He is ordered to shew cause for that lamentation.

1. Pharaoh had been a *troubler of the nations*, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of. He is like a young lion of the nations, ver. 2. loud and noisy, hefting and threatening as a lion when he roars. Great potentates, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, are in God's account no better than *beasts of prey*. He is like a whale or dragon, like a crocodile; so some, in the seas, very turbulent and vexatious, as the Leviathan that makes the deep to boil like a pot, Job xli. 31. when Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians, he came forth with his rivers, with his armies, troubled the waters, disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbour nations, fouled the rivers, and made them muddy. Note, A great deal of disquiet is often given to the world by the restless ambition and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that troubles Israel, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, Josh. vii. 25.

1. This is set forth here by a comparison. Is Pharaoh like a great whale, which when it comes up the river gives great disturbance, a Leviathan which Job cannot draw out with a hook? Job xli. 1. yet God has a net for him which is large enough to inclose him, and strong enough to secure him, ver. 3. I will spread my net over thee, even the army of the Chaldeans, a company of many people; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, dislodge him out of his possessions, throw him like a great fish upon dry ground, upon the open field, ver. 4. where being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, chap. xxix. 5. What can the strong fish do to help itself when it is out of the water and lies gasping? The flesh of this great whale shall be laid upon the mountains, ver. 5. and the valleys shall be filled with his height. Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain, that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys. Or such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this Leviathan, that when he is laid upon the ground he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this Leviathan as shall water the land of Egypt, the land wherein now he swims, now he sports himself, ver. 6. It shall reach to the mountains, and the waters of Egypt shall again be turned into blood, by this means, the rivers shall be full of thee; the judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the breaking of the heads of Leviathan in the waters, Psalm lxxiv. 13, 14. But now they go further, this old serpent has now not only his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

2. It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impressions which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbour nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, chap. xxxi. 15, 16. When Pharaoh that had been like a blazing burning torch is put out and extinguished, it shall make all about him look black, ver. 7. The heavens shall be hung with black, the stars darkened, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower receives its light; and therefore, ver. 8. when the bright lights of heaven are made dark above, darkness by consequence is set upon the land, upon the earth; so it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to, as before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten, it is just they should be repeated. When their privy-counsellors and statesmen, and those that have the conduct of the public affairs are deprived of wisdom and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes, then their lights are darkened, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, Isa. xix. 13. The princes of Zoan are become fools. Now upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, countries which they had not known, ver. 9. people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. (1.) It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom, thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory which they have such a value for stained. The hearts of many people will be vexed to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the gods of Egypt were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. (2.) It shall fill them with admiration, ver. 10. they shall be amazed at thee, shall wonder to see so great riches and power come to nothing, Rev. xviii. 17. Note, They that admire with complacency the pomp of this world, will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp; which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprise at all. (3.) It shall fill them with fear; even their kings, (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be horribly afraid for thee, concluding their own house to be in danger, when their neighbour's is on fire. When I shall brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every man for his own life. Note, When the sword of God's justice

is drawn against some to cut them off, it is therefore brandished before others to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it and made to reform, yet shall be frightened by it and made to tremble. They shall tremble at every moment because of thy fall. When others are ruined by sin, we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and obnoxious. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?

3. It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt.

1. The instruments of the desolation appear here very formidable. It is the sword of the king of Babylon, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall come upon thee, ver. 11. The swords of the mighty, even the terrible of the nations, all of them, ver. 12. an army that there is no standing before. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect some time or other to be engaged with those that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forward to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth with his rivers, with his armies, ver. 2. But God will now give him enough of it.

2. The instances of the desolations appear here very frightful; much the same with what we had before, chap. xxix. 10, 11, 12.—xxx. 7. (1.) The multitude of Egypt shall be destroyed; not decimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a multitude, will neither secure them against God's power, nor entitle them to his pity. (2.) The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled, the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In renouncing the pomps of this world we did ourselves great kindness, for they are things that are soon spoiled, and cheat their admirers. (3.) The cattle of Egypt that used to feed by the rivers shall be destroyed, ver. 13. either cut off by the sword, or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that came thither to drink. (4.) The waters of Egypt that used to flow briskly, shall now grow deep and slow and heavy, and shall run like oil, ver. 14. a figurative expression, signifying that there should be such an universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion. (5.) The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, ver. 15. Corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth: when those are smitten that dwell therein, the ground is untillied, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fulness of those things, and are full of them; that enjoy most, and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were full of their pleasant and plentiful country, and the rich products of it. Every one that talked with them might perceive how much it filled them. But God can soon make their country destitute of that whereof it is full; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of treasures in heaven. When the country is made destitute, (1.) It shall be an instruction to them, then shall they know that I am the Lord. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute much to our right knowledge of God as our portion and happiness. (2.) It shall be a lamentation to all about them. The daughters of the nations shall lament her, ver. 16. either because in alliance with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or being admirers of her they at least share in her grief, and sympathize with her. They shall lament for Egypt and all her multitude, it shall pity them to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy, we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17. ¶ It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. 20. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. 21. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22. Ashur is there and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword: 23. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24. There is Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. 25. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. 26. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude; her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. 27. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war, and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. 28. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain by the sword.

sword. 29. *There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which by their might are laid by them that are slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit.* 30. *There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and bear the shame with them that go down to the pit.* 31. *Pharaoh shall see them and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.* 32. *For I have caused my terror in the land of the living, and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.*

This prophecy concludes and completes the burden of Egypt, and leaves it and all its multitude in the pit of destruction. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. The dead corpse of a kingdom is here,

1. *Brought to the grave.* The prophet is ordered to *cast them down to the pit, ver. 18.* to foretell it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, *Jer. i. 10.* He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Yet he must foretell it as one that had an affectionate concern for them, he must *wait for the multitude of Egypt, even when he casts them down.* When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried with the daughters of the famous nations, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony; it is but a poor allay to the reproach and terror of death, to be buried with those that were famous; yet this is all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and imperious nations? no, she must take her lot with them, *ver. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty?* Art thou so much fairer than any other nation, that thou shalt expect therefore to be excused? no, others as fair as thou art sunk into the pit; go down therefore and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. Thou art like them, and art like to lie among them; the multitude of Egypt shall all fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword, now there is a general slaughter made among the nations. Egypt with the rest must drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is delivered to the sword, to the sword of war, but in God's hand the sword of justice is delivered to be publicly executed: draw her and all her multitude; either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave in a hearse; or as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sledge; draw them to the pit, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

2. This corpse of a kingdom is *but welcome to the grave*, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as *Isa. xiv. 9.* &c. the surprising fall of the king of Babylon is thus illustrated, *hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming*, and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness; so here, *ver. 20. they shall speak to him out of the midst of hell*, as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them, in acknowledging that name, which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of contesting with God, and none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, where are ye now? what have you brought your attempts to at last?

Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last; these nations here spoken of probably were such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off; but Egypt know that she has neighbours far. When she goes to the grave she doth but migrate *ad plures*, there are innumerable before her. But it is observable, that though Judah and Jerusalem were just about this time or a little before utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that Egypt welcomed to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, altered the property of it; it was not to them a going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor slain according to the slaughter of other nations, *Isa. xxvii. 7.* But let us see who they are that are gone to the grave before Egypt, that lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword, with whom she must not take up her lodging.

1. There lies the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy, *ver. 22. Assur is there, and all her company*; all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon that crown. That mighty potentate that used to lie in state with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are all of them slain, fallen by the sword; the number of their mounts was cut off in the midst, and being bloody and deceitful men they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their graves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, *ver. 23.* All their company is such as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation there is of such, who had caused terror in the land of the living; but as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears; in the grave the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor, *Job iii. 18.* so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors; who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors to those, who instead of making themselves blessings, made themselves terrors in their generation.

2. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which perhaps within the memory of man at that time had been wasted and brought down. *There is Elam and all her multitude*, the king of Elam, and his numerous armies, *ver. 24, 25.* They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations in their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain, that went down uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God: They have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit, i. e. they are fallen under the common disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror, shall sooner or later bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is put in the midst of them that be slain. All the honour he can now pretend to is to be admired in the chief sepulchre.

3. There lies the Scythian power, which about this time was busy in the world; Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own they could lay their hands on; but at length Darius king of the Medes drew them by a wile into his power, cut off the chance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, *ver. 26.* There lies Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying-place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword. These Scythians dying ingloriously as they lived, are not laid as the other nations spoken of before, in the bed of honour, *ver. 27. they shall not lie with the mighty*, shall not be buried in state as those are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their grave with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid under their heads, as if they could sleep the sweeter in the grave, when they laid their heads on such a pillow; these Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but their iniquities shall be upon their sons; they shall for their iniquity be left unburied: though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

4. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was foretold, *chap. xxv. 13.* Among the sepulchres of the nations, there is Edom, *ver. 29.* There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, her kings and all her princes, her wise statesmen (which Edom was famous for) and her brave soldiers; these with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword; their might could not prevent it, nay their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them to engage in war, and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness. A deal of pains they took to ruin themselves, as many do, who with their might, with all their might, are laid by them that were slain with the sword. The Edomites retained circumcision, being of the seed of Abraham. But that shall stand them in no stead, they shall lie with the uncircumcised.

5. There lie the princes of the north, and all the Zidonians. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were, who relied much upon that part of their strength, but they are gone down with the slain, *ver. 30.* down to the pit: Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it and trusted to it; and as the Edomites with their might, so those with their terror, are laid with them that are slain by the sword, and are forced to take their lot with them. They bear their shame with them that go down to the pit, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

Lastly, All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hope of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste. *Ver. 28. You, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised*, when God is pulling down the unbuilt and unfortified nations, thou must expect to come down with them. (1.) It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt, to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before, *ver. 31. Pharaoh shall see them and be comforted*; it will be some ease to his mind, that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle; his, not the first army that has been cut off; his, not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenham observes here, "That the comfort which wicked ones have of their death is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary." They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow sufferers; the rich man in hell dreads it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see and be comforted. (2.) But nothing will be an exemption from these miseries; for, *ver. 32. I have caused my terror in the land of the living.* Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them. *Od-riut dim metuast.* But now the great God hath caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming; *Psal. cxvii. 13.* In this day of terror Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be laid with them that are slain with the sword.

The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states may shew us something, (1.) Of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come and see the calamitous state of human life; see what a dying world this is; the strong die, the mighty die, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a killing world this is; they are all slain with the sword. As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit. (2.) Of the other world; though it is the destruction of nations as such, that perhaps is principally intended here; yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners; of those that are uncircumcised in heart; they are slain by the sword of divine justice; their iniquity is upon them, and with it they bear their shame. Those, Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him; though they be as pompous, though they be as numerous as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

C H A P. XXXIII.

The prophet is now come off his circuit, which he went as judge in God's name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighbouring nations, and having finished with them, and read them all their doom in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people; and receives further instructions what to say to them. (1.) He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet; that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable, *ver. 1-9.* The substance of this we had before, *chap. iii. 17, &c.* (2.) He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God, that they were upon their trial, upon their good behaviour, that if a wicked man repent he shall not perish; but if a righteous man apostatize he shall perish, *ver. 10-20.* (3.) Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and (which is very strange) grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them, because they persisted in their sins, *ver. 21-29.* (4.) Here is a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion, *ver. 30-33.*

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman; 3. If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people; 4. Then whoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh

not warning: if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him: but he that taketh warning, shall deliver his soul. 6. But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned: if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7. ¶ So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

The prophet had been by express order from God taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested and close siege laid to it, chap. xxiv. 27. But now Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and her his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor if he had not had mercy in store for them would we have *shewed them such things as these*. In these verses we have,

1. The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions adjusted between him and those that employ him, ver. 2-6.

(1.) It is supposed to be a public danger, that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman, when *God brings the sword upon a land*, ver. 2. The sword of war whenever it comes upon a land is of God's bringing: it is the sword of the Lord, of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time when a country is in fear of a foreign invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surprised with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms, and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they set a man of their coast, some likely person, that lives upon the borders of the country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wife are the children of this world in their generation. Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom, that are continually to employ themselves; and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves for the public safety.

(2.) It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is, (1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming. (2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet; or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him, by those that set him to be their watchman, that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now, (1.) If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great or so near as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. If any person goes presumptuously into the mouth of danger, though he heard the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes, and takes him away in his folly, he is *felo de se*, foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But, (2.) If the watchman do not do his duty; if he might have seen the danger, and did not, but was asleep or heedless, or looking another way; or if he did see the danger, (for so the case is put here) and shifted only for his own safety, and blew not the trumpet to warn the people; so that some are surprised and cut off in their iniquity, ver. 6. cut off suddenly without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God; which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is taken away in his iniquity. But his blood shall be required at the watchman's hand: he shall be found guilty of his death because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning, and he that takes warning, has delivered his soul.

2. The application of this to the prophet, ver. 7, 8, 9. 1. He is a watchman to the house of Israel. He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel, he was a watchman by office, for they were the children of the prophets and the covenant. They did not set him for a watchman, as the people of the land did, ver. 2. For they were not so wise for their souls to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interest; But God did it for them; he appointed them a watchman. 2. His business as a watchman is to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin. This is the word he must hear from God's mouth, and speak to them. (2.) God hath said, *That the wicked man shall surely die*; he shall be miserable; unless he repent he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him: shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God hath said it, and will never unsay it, nor can all the world gain say it, that the wages of sin is death. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests which pass into the other world, and last to eternity, as national interests do not. (2.) It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this; warn them from me: which intimate that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it; nay, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, Matt. iii. 7. (3.) It is the work of ministers, to give him warning, to say to the wicked it shall be ill with them, Isa. iii. 11. God, faith in general, *The soul that sinneth it shall die*: The minister's business is to apply this to particular persons, and to say, *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die*, whoever thou art, if thou go on full in thy trespasses, they will

inevitably be thy ruin: O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, thou shalt surely die. And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to warn the wicked from his way, warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself; if the prophet do not warn the wicked of the ruin that is at the end of this wicked way, that *wicked man shall die in his iniquity*; for though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to plead in the great day, that their watchman did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for though they were so, it will be made to appear that *God left not himself without witness*. But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account, *his blood will I require at thy hand*. The blind leader shall fall with the blind follower into the ditch. See what a desire God has of the salvation of sinners, in that he resents it so ill, if those concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day, who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe they shall have peace, though they go on.

4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of it, though he do not see the success of it, ver. 9. *If thou warn the wicked of his way*, if thou tel him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, *he shall die in his iniquity*, and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and ruin, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Note, It is a comfort to ministers that they may through grace save themselves, though they cannot be instrumental to save so many, as they wish, of those that hear them.

10. ¶ Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live faith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live. 17. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the LORD is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. 18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had before, chap. xviii. 20, &c. and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God, as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand; that it is no wonder they are here repeated, as those were, though we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

1. The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now in his providence contending with them, but their uncircumcised hearts were not as yet humbled, for they were industrious to justify themselves, though thereby they reflected on God. Two things they insisted upon in their reproaches of God, and in both they added iniquity to their sin, and misery to their punishment.

(1.) They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness or sincerity in them, Ver. 10. God had set life before them, but they plead that he had set it out of their reach, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said some time ago, chap. xxiv. 23. *Ye shall pine away in your iniquities*: with that word he had concluded his threatening against Judah and Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken absolutely to drive them to despair, whereas it was spoken conditionally to bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness, and herein they would make him contradict himself; for (say they) if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, as thou hast often told us they are; and if we must, as thou sayest, pine away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, how shall we then live? If this be our doom, there is no remedy, *We die, we perish, we all perish*. Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption, when they were warned against sin, to sink into despair, when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

(2.) They quarrelled with his threatenings and judgments, as having no justice

justice or equity in them. They said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, ver. 17. And again, ver. 20, suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, and that with him there was respect of persons, and he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause.

2. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these cavils.

1. Those that *despaired of finding mercy* with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to show mercy, ver. 11. When they spoke of pining away in their iniquity, God sends the prophet to them with all speed to tell them, that though their case was sad, yet it was not desperate, but there was yet *hope in Israel*. (1.) It is certain that God has no delight in the ruin of sinners, nor doth he desire it; if they will destroy themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has no pleasure in it; but would rather they should *turn and live*, for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather sinners should turn and live, than go on and die. He hath said it. He hath sworn it, that by these two immutable things, in both which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation; we have his word and his oath; and since he could swear by no greater he swears by himself; *As I live*. They questioned whether they should live, though they did repent and reform; yea, saith God, *As sure as I live*, true penitents shall live also: for *their life is hid with Christ in God*. (2.) It is certain that God is sincere and in earnest in the calls he gives sinners to repent; *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way*. To repent is to *turn from our evil way*; This God requires sinners to do; this he urgeth them to do, by repeated pressing instances, *Turn ye, Turn ye*: O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly, without delay! This he will enable them to do, if they will but *frame their doings to turn to the Lord*, Hof. v. 4. For he hath said, *I will pour out my spirit unto you*, Prov. i. 23. And in this he will accept of them; for it is not only what he commands, but what he courts them to. (3.) It is certain that if sinners perish in their impenitency, it is long of themselves; they die, because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* God would have heard them, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that *despaired of finding justice* with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of the rule of judgment, which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of its own iniquity; he that runs may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now dead. it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10. If God speak concerning it to build and to plant; if it do wickedly, he will recal his favours and leave it to ruin: But if he speak concerning it to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence and deliver it: So it is here. In short, the most plausible professors, if they apostatise, shall certainly *perish for ever* in their apostacy from God. And the most notorious sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be happy for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid senseless people, that said, *The way of the Lord is not equal?* for these rules of judgment are so plainly just, that they need no other confirmation of them, but the repetition of them.

1. If those that have made a great profession of religion throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God, and grow loose and carnal, and sensual and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, ver. 12, 13—18.

(1.) God doth say to the *righteous man* that he *shall surely live*, ver. 13. He saith it by his word, by his ministers; he that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live; Sure such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and if in order to that he be upright and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in love of God, and be for ever happy in that love.

(2.) Righteous men that have very good hopes of themselves, and that others have a very good opinion of, yet are in danger of turning to iniquity, by *trusting to their righteousness*. So the case is put here, *If he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity*, and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it; this may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceitedness of themselves and confidence in themselves. He trusts to the merit of his own righteousness, and thinks he has already made God so much his debtor, that now he may venture to *commit iniquity*, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever ill deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger by them, having so many good deeds beforehand to balance them. Or, he trusts to the strengths of his own righteousness; thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation, and it cannot overcome him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on the *confines of sin*, he is drawn at length into the depths of hell. This ruined the Pharisees, they *trusted to themselves that they were righteous*; and that their long prayers and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widows houses.

(3.) If righteous men *turn to iniquity*, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers and all their alms shall be forgotten, no mention shall be made, no remembrance had of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked as if they had never been. The *righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him* from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law in the day of his transgression. When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead in his own defence that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government: No, *he shall not be able to live*: the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience, in the day that he sinneth: but rather shall to both aggravate the sin and folly of his apostasy. And therefore for his iniquity that he committed he shall die, ver. 13: And again, ver. 18. *He shall even die thereby*, and it is long of himself.

2. If those that have lived a wicked life repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

(1.) God saith to the *wicked*, *Thou shalt surely die*. The way that thou art in leads to destruction: The wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin. It was said to the righteous man, *Thou shalt surely live*, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness, but he made an ill use of it, and was emboldened by it to *commit iniquity*. It was said to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die*, for warning

to him not to persist in his wicked ways. And he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus, even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a favour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a favour of death unto death. When God saith to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die, die eternally*, it is not to frighten him out of his sins, but to frighten him out of his sins.

(2.) There is many a wicked man that was hastening apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He *turns from his sin*, ver. 14, and is resolved he will have no more to do with it; and as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he *restores the pledge*, ver. 15, which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; he *gives again that which he had robbed* and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor doth he only *cease to do evil*, but he *learns to do well*, he doth that which is lawful and right, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man. A great change! since a while ago he neither feared God nor regarded man. But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace; he that was going on in the paths of death and the destroyer, now walks in the statutes of life, in the way of God's commandments, which was both life in it, Prov. xii. 28, and life at the end of it, Matth. xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres without committing iniquity, though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity. He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins he before allowed himself in.

(3.) He that doth thus repent and return shall escape the ruin, he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it he shall find mercy. He *shall surely live, he shall not die*, ver. 15. Again, ver. 19. *He shall surely live*: Again, ver. 19. *He hath done that which is lawful and right, and he shall live thereby*. But will not his wickedness be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them, ver. 12. *As for the wickedness of the wicked*, though it is very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. Now it is become his grief it shall not be his ruin. Now there is a settled separation between him and sin; there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as *upbraided with them*, ver. 16. *None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned him*, either as a clog to his pardon, or an allay to the comfort of it, or any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge, whether the *way of the Lord be not equal*; whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners, and glorify him in the salvation of penitents. The conclusion of the whole matter is, ver. 20. *O ye house of Israel*, though you are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and *I will judge you every one after his ways*. Though they were sent into captivity by the lump, good fish and bad inclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will render to every one according to his works. Therefore, *God's way is equal* and unexceptionable; but as for the children of thy people, God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses, Exod. xxxii. 7. they are *thy people*, I can scarce own them for mine, as for them *their way is unequal*; this way they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures, it will certainly be found that he is in the right and they are in the wrong.

21. ¶ And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22. Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27. Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. 28. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29. Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

Here is, 1. The tidings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity, and of the fifth month, Jer. lii. 12, 13. Tidings hereof were brought to the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year and the tenth month, ver. 21, which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that there being a constant correspondence at this time more than ever kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before. But this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one that escaped, who could be particular, and would be *pathetical* in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames, chap. xxiv. 26. *He that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears*, to bear it more distinctly than ever from one that could say, *quæque ipse mihi Jerima vidi*.

2. The divine impressions and influences he was under to prepare him for these heavy tidings. *ver. 22* *The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what he had in the former part of this chapter, and now he was no more dumb, he prophesied now with more freedom and boldness, being by the event proved a true prophet, to the confusion of those that contradicted him. All the prophecies from chap. xxiv. to this chapter, having relation purely to the nations about, it is probable the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing: for he could not otherwise say to the Ammonites, Say to Tyrus, say unto Pharaoh, &c. so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned: like Zacharias, when he could not speak, he wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good, by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable he had, during these three years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but never spoke to them as a prophet by inspiration till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instruction, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he ought to speak.*

3. The particular message he was intrusted with, relating to these Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land. *ver. 24.* See what work sin had made; the cities of Israel were now become the wastes of Israel, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had escaped the sword and captivity still continued there, and began to think of resettling. This was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that it was some time before this that Gedaliah (a modest humble man) and his friends were slain; but probably at this time Johanan and the proud man that joined with him were at the height, *Jer. xliii. 2.* and before they came to a resolution to go into Egypt, wherein Jeremiah comforted them, it is probable the project was to establish themselves in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel here comforted them, and probably dispatched the message away by the person that brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps, those here prophesied against might be some other party of Jews that remained in the land, hoped to take root there, and to be sole masters of it, after Johanan and his forces were gone into Egypt.

Now we have,

1. An account of the pride of these remaining Jews, who dwell in the wastes of the land of Israel. Though the providence of God concerning them had been very humbling, and still was very threatening, yet they were intolerably haughty and secure, and promised themselves peace. He that brought the news to the prophet, that Jerusalem was smitten, could not tell him (it is likely) what these people said, but God tells him *they say the land is given us for our inheritance, ver. 24.* Our partners being gone, it is now all our own by survivorship; or for want of heirs, it comes to us as occupants; we shall now be placed alone in the midst of the earth, and have it all to ourselves. This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand of God, and a reigning selfishness, and narrow-spiritedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of their country, as long as they hoped to find their own account in it; cared not though it were all waste, so that they might have the sole property; a poor inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence to compare their case with Abraham's, glorying in this, that *we have Abraham to our father*; Abraham, say they, *was one, one family, and he inherited the land, and lived many years in the peaceable enjoyment of it; but we are many, many families, more numerous than he, the land is given to us for inheritance.* (1.) They think they can make out as good a title from God to this land, as Abraham could. If God gave this land to him that was but one worshipper of him, as a reward of his service, much more will he give it to us who are many worshippers of him, as the reward of our service; and this speaks the great conceit they had of their own merits, as if they were greater than those of Abraham their father, who yet was not justified by works. (2.) They think they can make good the possession of this land against the Chaldeans, and all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against those that were competitors with him for it. If he that was but one could hold it, much more shall we that are many, and have many more at command than his three hundred trained servants. This speaks the confidence they had in their own might; they had got possession, and were resolved to keep it.

2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends them a message sufficient to do both.

1. To humble them he tells them of the wickedness they still persisted in, which rendered them utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they could not expect God should give it them. They had been followed with one judgment after another, but they had not profited by those means of grace so as might be expected; they were still unreformed, and how could they expect that they should possess the land? *shall ye possess the land?* what such wicked people as ye are? *How shall I put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land?* *Jer. iii. 19.* Surely you never reflect upon yourselves, else you would rather wonder that you are in the land of the living, than expect to possess this land. For do you not know how bad you are? (1.) You make no conscience of forbidden fruit; forbidden food, *you eat with the blood*, directly contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and his sons, then when God gave them possession of the earth, *Gen. ix. 4.* (2.) Idolatry, that covenant-breaking sin, that sin which the jealous God has been in a particular manner provoked by to lay your country waste, is still the sin that most easily besets you, and which you have a strong inclination to. *You lift up your eyes towards your idols*, which is a sign that though perhaps you do not bow your knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set your hearts upon them, and hanker after them. (3.) You are as fierce and cruel and barbarous as ever, *you shed blood*, innocent blood. (4.) You confide in your own strength, your own arm, your own bow, and have no dependence on or regard to God and his providence; *ye stand upon your sword*, *ver. 26.* you think to carry all before you, and make all your own by force of arms. How can they expect the inheritance of Isaac (as these did) who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had his hand against every man? *Gen. xvi. 12.* and Esau's resolution to live by his sword? *Gen. xxvii. 40.* We meet with those, *chap. xxxii. 27.* who when they died thought they could not lie easy under ground, unless they had their swords under their heads. Here we meet with those who while they live think they cannot stand firm above ground, unless they have their swords under their feet, as if swords were both the softest pillows, and the strongest pillars, though it was sin, it was sin that first drew the sword; but blessed be God, there are those who know better things, that stand upon the support of the divine power and promise, and lay their heads in the bosom of divine love, not trusting in their own sword, *Psal. xlv. 3.* (5.) You are guilty of all manner of abominations, and particularly *ye defile every one his neighbour's wife*, which is an abomination of the first magnitude; *and shall ye possess the land?* What, such vile miscreants as you? Note, They cannot expect to possess the land, nor to enjoy any true comfort or happiness here or hereafter, that live in rebellion against the Lord.

2. To terrify them he tells them of the farther judgments God had in store for them, which should make them utterly unable to possess this land, so that they could not stand it out against the enemy. Do they say they shall possess the land? No, God hath said it, he hath sworn it, *As I live saith the Lord.* Though he has sworn that he delights not in the death of sinners, yet he hath sworn also, that those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, shall not enter into his rest. (1.) They that are in the cities, here called the wastes, shall fall by the sword, either by the sword of the Chaldeans who come to avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's swords, in their intestine broils. (2.) They that are in the open field shall be devoured by wild beasts, which swarmed of course in the country when it was dispeopled, and there were none to master them and keep them under, *Exod. xxiii. 20.* When the army of the enemy had quitted the country, yet still there was no safety in it. *Noisome beasts* was one of the four fore judgments, *chap. xiv. 15.* (3.) They that be in the forts and in the caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover them, nor men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall die of the pestilence. (4.) The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands shall be most desolate, *ver. 28.* *It shall be desolation, desolation, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it.* The mountains of Israel, the fruitful mountains, Zion itself the holy mountain not excepted, shall be desolate, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that none shall pass through; as it was threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 52.* *ye shall be left few in number.* (5.) The pomp of her strength, whatever she glories in as her pomp, and trusts to as her strength, it shall be made to cease. (6.) The cause of all this was very bad; it is for all their abominations which they have committed. It is sin that doth all this mischief; that makes nations desolate, and therefore we ought to call it an abomination. (7.) Yet the effect of all this will be very good. *Then shall they know that I am the Lord, am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance; when I have made the land most desolate.* Those are untractable, unteachable indeed, that are not made to know their dependence upon God, when all their creature-comforts fail them and are made desolate.

30. ¶ Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses spoke conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy, and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses those are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon under divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with. They made some shew of religion and devotion. But their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of, is *mocking the messengers of the Lord*, one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it.

Two ways they mocked the prophet Ezekiel:

1. By *invidious, ill-natured reflections upon him*, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spoke so well to him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, surely would not speak ill of him behind his back; but God comes and tells him, *the children of thy people are still talking against thee, ver. 30. or talking of thee, no good, I doubt.* Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day; it is well they do not; for if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work, not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers; not only what is decreed against them or sworn against them, not only what is written against them or spoken with solemnity and deliberation, but of what is said against them in common talk, among neighbours when they meet in an evening, *by the walls and in the doors of their houses*; where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They had no crime to lay to the prophets charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless scornful bantering way; they said jokingly, *Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord*; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us and furnish us with matter for discourse. Note, Those have arrived to a great pitch of profaneness, that can make so great a privilege and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the word of God, a matter of sport and ridicule; yea though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

2. By *dissembling with him* in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is open before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here,

1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those, *Matt. xv. 8.* who draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. (1.) They are diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace. *They come unto thee as the people cometh.* In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, *chap. viii. 1.* and there, it is probable, they spent their new-moons and their sabbaths in religious exercises, *2 Kings iv. 23.* When the prophet was bound, the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people when they had not the help for their souls they wished for, were thankful for what they had, it was a reviving in their bondage. Now these hypocrites came according to the coming of the people, as duly and as early as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come as the people came, seems to intimate that the reason why they came was because other people came; they did not come out of conscience towards God, but only for company, for fashion-sake,

fake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen. Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances, may yet be found much in the external observation of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel; and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican. (2.) They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly; there was none of them whispering or laughing or gazing about them, or sleeping. But *they sit before thee as my people*, with all the shews of gravity and serenity and composure of mind. They sit out the time without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. (3.) They were very attentive to the word preached; they are not thinking of something else, but they *hear thy words*, and take notice of what thou sayest. (4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though behind his back they could not give him a good word, yet to his face *they shewed much love* to him and his doctrine: they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chaldeans; for they would be thought to be some of his best friends and well-wishers. (5.) They took a great deal of pleasure in the world; they *delighted to know God's word*, Isa. lvii. 2. "Herod heard John Baptist gladly," Mark vi. 20. *Thou art unto them as a very lovely song*. Ezekiel's matter was surprising, his language fine, his expressions elegant, his similitudes apt, his voice tunable, and his delivery graceful; so that they could sit with as much pleasure to hear him preach, as (if I may speak in the language of our times) to see a play or an opera, or to hear a concert of music. Ezekiel was to them as one *that had a pleasant voice*, and could sing well, or play well on an instrument. Note, It is possible men may have their fancies pleased by the word, and yet not have their consciences touched, nor their hearts changed; the *itching ear gratified*, and yet not the corrupt nature sanctified.

2. The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions; it is all a sham, it is all a jest. (1.) They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they *shew much love*, it is only *with the mouth*, from the teeth outward, but their heart goes after their covetousness, they are as much set upon the world as ever, as much in love and league with it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise, the bent and bias of their souls is towards them, and their inward thoughts are employed in projects about them. Note, Covetousness is the running sin of multitudes that make a great profession of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly eats the love of God out of their hearts. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches are the thorns that choke the seed, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves, who when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so. (2.) They yield no subjection to it. They *hear thy words*, but it is only a hearing that they give thee, for they will not do them, ver. 31. And again, ver. 37. they do them not. They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to any one duty that is against the grain to flesh and blood. Note, There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

Lastly, Let me see what will be in the end hereof. *Shall their unbelief and carelessness make the word of God of none effect?* By no means. (1.) God will confirm the prophets word, though they *contemn it*, and make light of it, ver. 33. What he saith *will come to pass*, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, though they may be bantered by profane wits, yet they cannot be baffled. (2.) They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it comes to pass *they shall know*, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that a prophet has been among them, though they make no more of him than as one that had a pleasant voice. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is among them, and improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet has been among them, when the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes. The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things, than now they have, and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know a prophet has been among them, when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall be a witness against them that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone whom they now speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to shew them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well. Note, Those that will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them, will justly be made to know the worth of them by the want of them. As they who should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, which now they slighted and might not see it.

C H A P. XXXIV.

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before in this book. Now in this chapter the shepherds of Israel, their rulers both in the church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much accessory to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglect to do the duty of their place. Here is, (1.) A high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskillfulness and unfaithfulness in the management of public affairs, ver. 1-6. And again, ver. 8. (2.) Their discharge from the trust for their insufficiency and treachery, ver. 7-10. (3.) A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done by their mal-administrations, ver. 11-16. (4.) Another charge exhibited against those of the flock that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble, ver. 17-22. (5.) Another promise that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah to be the great and good shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, ver. 23-31.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe ye with the wool, ye killed them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which

was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye fought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5. And they were scattered because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. 6. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till chap. xl. It was most probable it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to enquire into the causes of it.

1. The prophet is ordered to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim or council of state, or whoever they were that had the conduct of public affairs, in higher or a lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions shewed them, that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under-shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel, Psalm lxxx. 1. And that which he saith is, *Woe to the shepherds of Israel*: though they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter him. Note, If men's dignity and power doth not, as it ought, keep them from sin, it will not serve to exempt from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God if they do not repent. We had a *woe to the pastors*, Jer. xxiii. 1. God will in a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

2. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with.

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge: *Should not the shepherds feed their flocks?* No doubt they should, they betray their trust if they do not; not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them and bring them to it. But these shepherds made this the least of their care; they feed themselves, contrived every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure of the profits of their places, they did eat the fat, the cream; so some; for he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it, 1 Cor. ix. 7. and they made sure of the best of the milk. They made sure of the fleece, and clothed themselves with the wool, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects, yea, and killed them that were well fed, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard. Note, There is a *woe* to those who are in public trust, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefice than about the office, what money is to be got than what good to be done. It is an old complaint, *all seek their own*, and too many more than their own.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge. *Ye fed not the flock*. They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so lazy and slothful were they; nay, they never desired or designed it, so treacherous and unfaithful were they.

1. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *distempered*, did not strengthen them, or heal them, or bind them up, ver. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died, they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care of the poor to see them provided for; they might starve for them. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error; to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss and out of course every where, and nothing was done to rectify them.

2. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *dispersed*; that were driven away by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek shelter where they could find a place, or that wandered of choice upon the mountains and hills, ver. 6, where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became meat to them, ver. 5. Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country waxed thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wanted hands both in the field of corn and in the field of battle, both in harvest and in war. *My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth*, ver. 6. And they were never enquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; none did search or seek after them. Nay, with force and cruelty they ruled them, which drove more away, and discouraged those that were driven away from all thoughts of returning. Their case is bad who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty, and the priests that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were they scattered, because there was no shepherd, ver. 8. There were those that called themselves shepherds, but really they were not. Note, Those that do not the work of shepherds, are foolish shepherds, Zech. xi. 15. If they are proud and above their business, idle and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad, as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds. Christ complains that his flock were as sheep having no shepherd, when yet the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, Mat. ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease; ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away and disperse them, by ruling them with force.

7. ¶ Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 8. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; 9. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the

word of the LORD: 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. 11. ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down saith the Lord GOD. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up in God's name against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a just indignation, and upon the flock with a tender compassion. God by the prophet here expresseth both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon, *ver.* 7. and again, *ver.* 9. to *hear the word of the Lord*, to hear this word. Let them *hear* how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not *hear the word of the Lord*, giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

1. How much *displeased* God is at the shepherds. Their crimes are repeated, *ver.* 8. God's flock became a prey to the deceivers first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity, and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no shepherds; and therefore God saith it, *ver.* 10. and confirms it with an oath, *ver.* 8. *I am against the shepherds*. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them; no, saith God, so far from that, that *I am against them*. Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is *against them*, and they shall know it; for, (1.) They shall be called to an account how they have discharged their trust; *I will require my flock at their hands*, and charge it upon them that so many of them are missing. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment day, who take upon them the care of souls, and yet take no care of them. Ministers must *watch and work*, as those that *must give account*, Heb. xii. 17. (2.) They shall be deprived *ab officio & beneficio*, they shall be turned out both from the work and from the wages of their place. *They shall cease from feeding the flock*, i. e. from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that power which they have *abused*, and that *trust* which they have *betrayed*. But if this were all their punishment, they could bear it well enough, therefore it is added, *neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth*, which instead of protecting, they had made a prey of. Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the public, cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them; but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

2. How much *concerned* God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them, because he saw them thus neglected, for *with him the fatherless find mercy*. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds *hear this word of the Lord*, and know that they have no part or lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it and take the comfort of it. Note, Though magistrates and ministers fail in doing their part for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under shepherds may prove carelets, but the Chief Shepherd *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. They may be false, but God *abides faithful*.

1. God will *gather* his sheep together that were scattered, and bring them back to the fold that had wandered from it. *I, even I*, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. *I will both search my sheep, and find them out*, *ver.* 11. as a shepherd doth, *ver.* 12. and bring them back as he doth the strayed sheep upon his shoulders, *from all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day*. There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep; which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secrecy and safety. But, (1.) Wherever they are, the eye of God will find them out; for his eyes run to and fro through the earth in favour of them. *I will seek out my sheep*, and not one that belongs to the fold, though driven never so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows them that are his, he *knows their work*, and *where they dwell*, Rev. ii. 13. and where they are hidden. - (2.) When his time is come, his arms will *fetch them home*, *ver.* 13. *I will bring them out from the people*. God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace, and will by his providence open a door for them, and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body: *I will gather them from the countries* into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person, *ver.* 16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away*. This was done when so many thousand Jews returned triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those

that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin, are brought back by repentance; when those that erred come to the acknowledgement of the truth; when God's *outcasts* are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies that were dispersed rally again upon the ceasing of persecution, and when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a farther accomplishment.

2. God will *feed* his people as the *sheep of his pasture*, that had been famished. God will bring the returning captives safe to their own land, *ver.* 13. *will feed them upon the mountains of Israel*, and that is a good *pasture*, and a *fat pasture*, *ver.* 14. there shall their *feeding* be; and there shall be their *fold*; and it is a *good fold*. There God will not only *feed them*, but *cause them to lie down*, *ver.* 15. which notes a *comfortable rest*, after they had tired themselves with their wanderings; and a *constant continuing residence*; they shall not be driven out again from these green pastures as they have been, nor shall they be disturbed, but shall lie down in a sweet repose, and there shall be *none to make them afraid*, Psalm xxiii. 2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*. Compare this with the like promise, *Jer.* xxiii. 3, 4. when God restored them not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of the fruits of it, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on mount Zion, the chief of the mountains of Israel; when they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were *fed in a good pasture*.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will *bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick*, will comfort those that *mourn in Zion* and with *Zion*. If ministers that should speak peace to those that are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But as it follows, the *fat and the strong shall be destroyed*. He that hath rest for disquieted saints hath terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As every valley shall be filled, so every mountain and hill shall be brought low, Luke iii. 5.

17. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. 18. *Seemeth it* a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19. And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. 20. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them: Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. 21. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; 22. Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. 25. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. 26. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. 27. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. 29. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. 30. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and that they, *even* the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD. 31. And ye my flock the flock of my pasture are men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock: God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, for *for judgment he came into this world*, John ix. 39. to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away, Luke i. 53. But completely at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, *judge between cattle and cattle, as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left*, Matt. xxv. 32, 33. which seems to have reference to this here. We have here,

1. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were *fat and strong*, the rams, and the he-goats, *ver.* 17. Those that, though they had no power as shepherds and rulers to oppress with, yet being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have much would have more, and if they set to it will have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them the one ewe lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 14. Do not the rich oppress the poor merely with the help of their riches, and draw them

them before the judgment seats? Jam. ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The rams and the he-goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, eat the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they trod down the residue of the pastures, and fouled the residue of the waters, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had trodden into the dirt, and drink that which they had muddied, ver. 18, 19. This intimates, that the great men, not only by extortion and oppression, made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarce left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little coarse fare they had was embittered to them. And this seemed a small thing to them; they thought there was no harm in it; as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that are at ease, and the proud, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort.

But this was not all: they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock, ver. 21. they thrust with side and shoulder those that were feeble, for the weakest goes to the wall, and pushed the diseased with their horns, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and fainty the rest will secure it as they can, and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun, but these on the contrary were most injurious to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves of, they did what they could to rid the country of them, and so scattered them abroad, and if the poor, whom Christ saith we must have always with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved but sent far enough. Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats are designed to represent the Scribes and Pharisees, for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from, ver. 23. they devoured widows houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders; besides, that they were continually vexatious and injurious to the poor of the flock that waited on the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent stations in it, Acts xx. 30.

2. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and wait for the consolation of Israel, ver. 22. I will save my flock, and they shall no more be spoiled as they have been by the beasts of prey, by their own shepherds or by the rams and he-goats among themselves. Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom; and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning the Messiah himself. (1.) He shall have his commission from God himself, I will set him up, ver. 23. I will raise him up, ver. 29. he sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. (2.) He shall be the great shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one shepherd under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold. (3.) He is God's servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to the glory. His servant to re-establish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. (4.) He is David; one after God's own heart, set as his king upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner: with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God would give the throne of his father David. He is both the root and offspring of David. (5.) He is the plant of renown, because a righteous branch, Jer. xxiii. 5. a branch of the Lord that is beautiful and glorious, Isa. iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3. Its name shall be remembered, Psa. xlv. 17. and Christ's in it.

2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded, ver. 25. I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good, all the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is; I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, ver. 24. will own them, and will be owned by them; in order to this, my servant David shall be a prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them, and for them. Note, Those and those only that have the Lord Jesus for their prince, have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then, they, even the house of Israel shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people. From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion. I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them, and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are here set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, ver. 31. They that belong to this flock, though they are spoken of as sheep, are really men; men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them it is promised,

1. That they shall enjoy a holy security, under the divine protection. Christ, our good shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to cease out of the land, ver. 25. having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broke their power and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring devouring lion to them; they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, nor the heathen a terror to them; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; sin and Satan, death and hell are conquered. And then they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are; they shall not only dwell there, but they shall sleep there; which notes not only that the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Note, Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep at ease that have Christ for their prince, for he will be their protector, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, nay none shall make them afraid. If God be for us, who can be against us? Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed. Through Christ God delivers his people, not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all the fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised, ver. 27. they shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbours to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; they shall know that I am the Lord; our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God and mistakes concerning him; and their experience of his

particular care concerning them, which encourageth their confidence in him; I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought and held down under oppression, and have delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. From whence they shall argue, he that has delivered, doth and will, therefore will we dwell safely. This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, Luke i. 74. That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, as those may do that serve him in faith.

2. That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things for their comfort and happiness. They shall no more be consumed with hunger in their land, ver. 29. Famine and scarcity, when Israel was punished with that judgment, turned as much to their reproach among the heathen as any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But they shall not bear the shame of the heathen any more. For the showers shall come down in their seasons, even showers of blessings, ver. 26. Christ is a shepherd that will feed his people; and they shall go in and out and find pasture. (1.) They shall not be consumed with hunger; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which those that are put off with cannot but be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements, for there was little in them compared with the Christian institutes, wherewith the mower fills his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall not be consumed with that hunger, for they shall be filled. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst. (2.) Showers of blessings shall come upon them, ver. 26, 27. The heavens shall yield their dews, the trees of the field also shall yield their fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, in the gospel church, it is, that God has made to all nations a feast; so that those must join themselves that would partake of gospel benefits. The cause of this plenty is the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion, the graces of Christ, this doctrine that drops as the dew; the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made faithful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty are the blessings of heaven poured down upon us, and the products of grace brought forth by us; our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the places round about my hill; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, shall go forth light to a dark world; and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion shall fare the better for it; and the nearer the church the nearer its God. And lastly, The effect of this plenty is, I will make them a blessing, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa. xix. 24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings of the world. He that is good let him do good, that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, Isa. lxi. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us to whom it is fulfilled: who are the sheep of this good shepherd, are fed in his pastures, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

CHAP. XXXV.

It was promised in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favour Zion, yea the set time should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlargeth upon the former promise concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church; the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir, that is Edom, is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for as they all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau that hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob by virtue of a particular blessing was to have dominion. Now here we have, (1.) The sin charged upon the Edomites, and that was their spite and malice to Israel, ver. 5-10, 11, 12, 13. (2.) The ruin threatened that should come upon them for this sin. God will be against them, ver. 3. and then their country shall be laid waste, ver. 4. depopulated, and made quite desolate, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. and left so when other nations that had been wasted should recover themselves, ver. 14, 15.

1. **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it. 3. And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. 4. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: 6. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, even blood shall pursue thee: for thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. 7. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth. 8. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. 9. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before, chap. xxv. 8. but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own. The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it, for the God of Israel hath said, O mount Seir, I am against thee. Note, Those that have God against them have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, neither dare

dare they prophesy any good of them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites, that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

1. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, *ver. 5.* God espouseth his people's cause and will plead it; takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it, and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. (1.) Because of the *enmity* they had against the people of God, that was rooted in the heart; thou hast had a *perpetual hatred* to them, to the very name of an Israelite. The Edomites kept up an *hereditary malice* against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birth-right and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him, *Gen. xxxiii.* and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again. But the posterity of Esau would never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hated them with a perpetual hatred. Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices than the virtues of their parents; and to tread in the steps of their sin, than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example, for though through the grace of God they may return and prevent the mischief of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the ill influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last: but not to be wondered at, that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old *enmity* that was put between the *seed of the woman* and the *seed of the serpent*, *Gen. iii. 15.* will continue to the end. *Marvel not if the world hate you.* (2.) Because of the *injuries* they had done to the people of God, they *shed their blood by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity*; they did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to *cut off* those of them that had escaped, *Obad. 14.* or they drove them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly as well as barbarous to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours with whom they had lived peaceably to *smite them secretly*, when strangers openly invaded them. It was in the time *that their iniquity had an end*, i. e. when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly and for their sins, yet are to be pitied, and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

2. What should be the effect and issue of that controversy. If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will *make it most desolate*, *ver. 3.* *Desolation and desolation.* (1.) The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword, *ver. 6.* *I will prepare thee unto blood*; Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength the more effectually to subdue it. The preparation is in the making a great while before for this destruction. *Thou hast not hated blood*, it implies thou hast delighted in it and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, *Unless thou hatest blood*, i. e. unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition, *blood shall pursue thee*: And then it is an intimation that the judgment may yet be prevented by a thorough reformation. *If he turn not he will whet his sword*, *Psal. vii. 12.* But if he turn he will lay it by, *Blood shall pursue thee*, i. e. the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or the judgment of blood, thy blood-thirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seekest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold, *Isa. xxxiv. 6.* the *mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with the slain*, *ver. 8.* The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. *Satia te sanguine quem sifisti.* (2.) The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, *ver. 4.* the *country made desolate*, *ver. 7.* for God will cut off from both him that *passeth out*, and him that *returneth*; and when the inhabitants are cut off that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay, and go into ruins; and that should till the land, that will soon be over-run with briars and thorns and become a wilderness. Note, Those who help forward the desolations of Israel may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is, that Edom shall be made *perpetual desolations*, *ver. 9.* and the *cities shall never return* to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that have a *perpetual enmity* to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other but to be made a *perpetual desolation*: Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

10. Because thou hast said, *These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it*; whereas the LORD was there: 11. Therefore, as I live saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them: and I will make myself known amongst them, when I have judged thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, *They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.* 13. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them. 14. Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. 15. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Here is, (1.) A farther account of the sin of the Edomites, and their ill carriage towards the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for *setting on the Babylonians*, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, *Raise it, raise it, down with it, down with it*, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is farther charged upon them, that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin, and in the desolations of the country. Many *blasphemies* they spoke against the *mountains of Israel*, saying with pride and pleasure, *they are laid desolate*, *ver. 12.* Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corrections of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of.

Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed, (1.) From a *sinful passion* against the people of Israel; from *anger and envy*, and

hatred against him, *ver. 11.* that *perpetual hatred* spoken of, *ver. 5.* Though they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did them a mischief. (2.) From a *sinful appetite* to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes, that when the people of Israel were destroyed, they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make something of a title to it, *ob defectum sanguinis*. If Jacob's issue fail they think they are next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; *These two nations Judah and Israel shall be mine*. Now is the time for me to put in for them; however they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours, *we will possess it*, when it is deserted: *Ceditur occupanti*, let us get possession; and that will be title enough. Note, Those have the spirit of Edomites who desire the death of others, because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with others *ailing*, because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of shewing ourselves upon such an occasion greedy of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it, and lower our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites covering the land of Israel, and gaping for it, there was a particular affront to God, when they said, *these lands are given us to devour*, and we shall have our bellies full of their riches. God saith, *you have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me*; for they expected possession upon a vacancy because Israel was driven out, *whereas the Lord was still there*, *ver. 10.* His temple indeed was burnt, and other the tokens of his presence gone, but his promise to give that land to the seed of Jacob for an inheritance, was not made void, but remained in *full force and virtue*; and by that promise he did in effect still keep possession for Israel, till they should in due time be restored to it. That was Ishmael's land, *Isa. viii. 8.* in that land he was to be born, and therefore that people shall continue in it of whom he is to be born, till he has passed his time in it, and then let who will take it; *The Lord is there*, i. e. the Lord Jesus is to be there; and therefore Israel's discontinuance of possession is no defeasance of their right, but it shall be kept for them, and they shall have, hold, and enjoy it by virtue of the divine grant, till the promise of this Canaan shall by the Messiah be changed into the promise of a far better. Note, It is a piece of presumption highly offensive to God, for Edomites to lay claim to those privileges and comforts that are peculiar to God's chosen Israel, and are reserved for them. It is *blasphemy against the mountains of Israel*, the holy mountains, as they are here called, *ver. 12.* to say, because they are for the present made a prey of, and *trod under foot of the Gentiles*, *Rev. xi. 2.* even the *holy city* itself, that therefore the *Lord has forsaken them*, their *God has forgotten them*. The apostle will by no means admit such a thought as this, that *God hath cast away his people*, *Rom. xi. 1.* No, though they are cast down for a time, they are not cast off for ever. Those *reproach the Lord* who say they are.

2. The notice God took of the barbarous insolence of the Edomites, and the doom passed upon them for it. *I have heard all thy blasphemies*, *ver. 12.* And again, *ver. 13.* *You have multiplied your words against me*, and *I have heard them*, I have observed them, I have kept an account of them. Note, In the multitude of words, none escapes God's cognisance; let them speak never so much, never so fast, though they *multiply words*, which they themselves regard not, but forget immediately, yet none of them are lost in the crowd, not the most *idle words*; but God hears them, and will be able to charge the sinner with them. All the *haughty and hard speeches* particularly which are spoken against the Israel of God, the words that are *magnified* as it is in the margin, *ver. 13.* as well as the words that are *multiplied*, God takes notice of. For as the triflingest words are not below his cognisance, so the daringest are not above his rebuke. *I have heard all thy blasphemies*. This is a good reason why we should bear reproach as if we heard it not, because *God will hear*, *Psal. xxxviii. 13—15.* God had heard the Edomites blasphemy, let them therefore hear their doom, *ver. 14, 15.* It was a national sin; the blasphemies charged upon them were the sense and language of all the Edomites, and therefore shall be punished with a national desolation. And, (1.) It shall be a distinguishing punishment. As God has peculiar favour for Israelites, so he has peculiar plagues for Edomites; so that *when the whole earth rejoiceth I will make thee desolate*; when other nations have their desolations repaired to their joy, thine shall be *perpetual*, *ver. 9.* (2.) The punishment shall answer the sin. *As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of the house of Israel*, God will give thee enough of desolation, since thou art so fond of it, *thou shalt be desolate*; *I will make thee so*. Note, Those who instead of *weeping with the mourners*, make a jest of their grievances, may justly be made to weep like the mourners, and themselves to feel the weight, to feel the smart of those grievances they set so light by. Some read, *ver. 14.* so as to complete the resemblance between the sin and the punishment; *The whole earth shall rejoice when I make thee desolate, as thou didst rejoice when Israel was made desolate*. Those that are glad at the death and fall of others may expect that others will be glad of their death, or their fall.

Lastly, In the destruction of the enemies of the church God designs his own glory, and we may be sure he will not come short of his design. (1.) That which he intends is to *manifest himself*, as a just and jealous God, firm to his covenant, and faithful to his people and their injured cause, *Ver. 11.* *I will make myself known among them when I have judged thee*. The Lord is and will be known by the judgments which he executeth. (2.) His intention shall be fully answered, not only his own people shall be made to know it to their comfort, but even the Edomites themselves, and all other the enemies of his name and people, shall know that he is the Lord, *ver. 4—9—15.* As the works of creation and common providence demonstrate that there is a God, so the care taken of Israel shews, that Jehovah the God of Israel is that God alone, the true and living God.

C H A P. XXXVI.

We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves with the prophet to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope before we have done with the chapter to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter; (1.) Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal state of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they should be settled again in their own land in the midst of peace and plenty, ver. 1—15. (2.) Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are minded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them to humble them for their sins, and under God's mighty hand, ver. 16—20. But it is promised, (1.) That God would glorify himself in shewing mercy to them, ver. 21—24. (2.) That he would sanctify them, by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service: and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to their prayers, ver. 25—38.

1. ALSO,

1. **A**LSO, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: 2. Thus saith the Lord GOD; because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: 3. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: 4. Therefore ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about: 5. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds to cast it out for a prey. 6. Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. 8. ¶ But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. 9. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: 10. And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: 11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 12. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. 13. Thus saith the Lord GOD: Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations: 14. Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD. 15. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face towards the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, chap. vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, ver. 1. And again, ver. 4. Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord; and what he saith to them, he saith to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, ver. 4. and again, ver. 6. The people were gone, some one way and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains and valleys: these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them: *The earth abideth for ever.* Now to shew the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would as at this time shew it such things as these.

Here is, 1. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It is become both a prey and a derision to the heathen that are round about, ver. 4. (1.) It is become a prey to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; ver. 3. They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen, to the residue of them; even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite; *Turba Romæ sequitur fortunam ut semper.* It is a common cry, when a man is down, down with him. (2.) It is become a derision to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done, *The enemy said, Alas! even the ancient high places are ours in possession,* ver. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications of the land of Israel, are its security, but we are become masters of it all. The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it; which is an instance of a base and fordid spirit; for the more glorious the prosperity was the more piteous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; *Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people,* ver. 3. All the talk of the country about, was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spoke of it had some peevish ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the scorn of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud, Psal. cxxiii. 4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people among such people, were sure to be a reproach when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity in its suffering-days to be every where spoken against.

VOL. II. No. CXXXVIII.*

2. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly.

Let us see, (1.) How they dealt with the Israel of God; they carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land; out of God's land; for so indeed it was; *they have appointed my land into their possession,* ver. 5. and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but entrenched upon God's prerogative. It was the holy land which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but cast it out for a prey, as if they had won it in a lawful war: And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments, and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the joy of all their hearts, because they got by it, and with despiteful minds to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is all the joy of a worldly heart; and the calamities of God's people all the joy of a spiteful mind. And those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people made a reproach of them; so that they were the shame of the heathen, ver. 6. Every body ridiculed them; and made a jest of them; and the truth is, they had by their own sin made themselves vile; so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

(2.) How God would deal with them who were thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He had spoken against the heathen, i. e. He hath passed sentence upon them, he hath determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the fire of his jealousy, both for his own honour, and for the honour of his people, ver. 5. Having a love for both, strong as death, he has a jealousy for both, cruel as the grave. They spoke in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them, and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, ver. 6. Fury is not in God, but he will exert his power against them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure. What he saith he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He hath lifted up his hand, and sworn by himself, hath sworn and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, ver. 7. Surely the heathen that are about you they shall bear their shame. Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people, sooner or later will have it turned upon themselves; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach. However in that day, when all the impenitent shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. The promises of God's favour to his Israel, and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies, to shew himself so much the more concerned for them, and ready to do them good; as David hoped that God would recompence him good for Shimei's cursing him. *Let them curse but bless thou.* In this way, as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will, and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain, if the more unkind men are, the more kind God is; if the more kindly he speaks to us, by his word and Spirit, and the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say to the mountains of Israel, which were now desolate and despised, that God is for them, and will turn to them, ver. 9. As the curse of God reacheth the ground for man's sake, so doth the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

1. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them. *My people Israel are at hand to come,* ver. 8. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are dispersed in many countries, and though they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they shall come again to their own border, Jer. xxi. 17. The time is at hand for their return. Though there were above forty years of the seventy, (perhaps fifty) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it. *A thousand years are with God but as one day.* The mountains of Israel are now desolate, but God will cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel, not as travellers passing over them but as inhabitants; not tenements, but freeholders; *they shall possess thee, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs, thou shalt be their inheritance.* It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful comfortable maintenance for their owners, at their return. When the land had enjoyed their sabbaths for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterwards, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath rest. *Ye shall be tilled and sown,* ver. 9. and shall yield your fruit to my people Israel, ver. 8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement in their own land. *The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be builded,* ver. 10. And I will settle you after your old estates, ver. 11. Their own sin had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall settle them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent, he is settled again in his father's house according to his former estate; bring hither the first robe, and put it on him. *Nay, I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings.* There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back, than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4. That the people after their return should be fruitful and multiply, and replenish this land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thick inhabited, as well peopled as ever. God will bring back to it all the house of Israel, even all of it; observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, ver. 10. all whose spirits God stirred up to return, and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or though but few in comparison returned at first; yet afterwards at divers times, they all returned; and then (saith God) I will multiply these men, ver. 10. multiply man and beast, and they shall increase, ver. 11. Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church though for a time it may be diminished yet shall recover itself and be again replenished.

5. That the reproach long since cast upon the land of Israel, by the evil spies, and of late revived, that it was a land that eat up the inhabitants of it by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan was got into an ill name: It had of old spued out the inhabitants, Lev. xvii. 28. the natives, the Aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have

put another construction upon it, *Numb. xiii. 32.* It had of late devoured the Israelites, and *spued* them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, it is a land, that instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabited it, *berreaves* them, *overthrows* them, and *causes them to fall*; it is a tenement that breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promised it shall be so no more; *thou shalt no more bereave them of men*, ver. 12. *Thalt devour men no more*, ver. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. Compare this with that promise, *Zech. viii. 4.* Note, God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty and power, then they *hear no more the shame of the heathen*, ver. 15. especially when it is reformed, when sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they *bear no more the reproach of the people*. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will be soon redressed, and their honour retrieved.

16. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me saying, 17. Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. 18. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *where-with* they had polluted it. 19. And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries, according to their way, and according to their doings I judged them. 20. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, *These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.* 21. ¶ But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which they have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. 23. And I will sanctify my great name *which was* profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you, before their eyes. 24. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return in due time to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes, that they were *unworthy*, utterly unworthy of such a favour, therefore to remove that discouragement God here shews them, that he would do it for them purely for his own name's sake, that he might be glorified in them and by them; that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most his glory. And the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this here is intended further to shew, that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God: to this end Christ directed all he did in that short prayer, *Father, glorify thy name*; and God declared it was his end in all he did, in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, John xiii. 28. Now observe here,

1. How God's name had suffered, both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

(1.) God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, ver. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. *But they defiled it by their own way*, their wicked way, that is *our own way*, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people *defiles* their land; renders it *abominable* to God and *uncomfortable* to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him, or with one another. What was *unclean* might not be made use of; by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us, we forfeit the use of them; and the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort allowed us, *nothing is pure* to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she touched ceremonially *unclean*, Lev. xv. 19. Sin is that *abominable thing* which the Lord *hates*, and which he cannot endure to look upon. They *shed blood* and *worshipped idols*, ver. 18. and with those sins *defiled the land*. For this God poured out his fury upon them, *scattered them among the heathen*; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands: Herein God was righteous and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nay he did justice to his own honour, for he *judged them according to their way, and according to their doings*, ver. 19. And yet the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that for mischief he brought them forth. Their neighbours considered them rather as a *sinful* people; and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him and put contempt upon him: and God's name was *continually every day blasphemed* by their oppressors, *Isaiah lii. 5.* (2.) When they entered into the land of the heathen, God had no glory by them there; but on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, ver. 20. (1.) It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but on the contrary a reproach to it. The name of God, and his holy religion was *blasphemed through them*, Rom. ii. 24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with God, were found correct in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words and the trusts reposed in them, *the enemies of the Lord* had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them; than which nothing could

be more scandalous. (2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of Israel: for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said in scorn, *These are the people of the land*, these wicked people, you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these *miserable people*, you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours: *These are the people that came out of Jehovah's land*, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these they that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a *wise and understanding people*? And that is said to have *God so nigh unto them*? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, that appear here so vile, so abject? Thus God told his people, and did not *increase his wealth by their price*, Psalm xlix. 12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

2. Let us now see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have *scattered them among the heathen*, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27. But though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet he had pity for his own holy land, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, ver. 21. In pity to that, God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land. Therefore *I will gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land*, ver. 21. *Not for your sake*, because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, for *form my holy name's sake*, ver. 22. that I may sanctify my great name, ver. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself; nor doth any thing make a man truly great, but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name, as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; I will sanctify my name which you have profaned. When God performs that which he hath sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy, *the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you, before their eyes* and yours. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe, (1.) God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself: he will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake, because he will be glorified. (2.) God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it had been profaned by the commission of sin.

25. ¶ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. 28. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be my people, and I will be your GOD. 29. I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corns and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach and famine among the heathen. 31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. 32. Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. 33. Thus saith the Lord GOD; in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34. And the desolate land shall be tilled; whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35. And they shall say, This land that was desolate, is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. 36. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. 37. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. 38. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feast; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of restoration, by the sense not only of their *unworthiness* of such a favour, (which was answered in the foregoing verses with this, that God in doing it would have an eye to his own glory, not to their *worthiness*) but their *unfitness* for such favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace, prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect, which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry: But it is farther intended as a draught of the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, chap. xxxiv. after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great shepherd: so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences

fluences and operations; which we had as much need of for our sanctification, as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

1. God here promiseth that he will *work a good work in them*, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, ver. 25, 26. 27. We had promises to the same purpose, chap. xi. 18, 29, 30. (1.) That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin; ver. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*; which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that, and to take away the sense of guilt, as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification, were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness, and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions; as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself *clean*, else his blood could not have been *cleansing* to us; and it is a holy Spirit that makes us holy. *From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* And ver. 29. *I will save you from all your uncleanness.* Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God, and burdensome to themselves; when guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are *cleansed* from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being *saved* from it. This God promiseth his people here, in order to his being *sanctified* in them, ver. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name, unless he sanctify our hearts; nor live to his glory, but by his grace. (2.) That God would give them a *new heart*; a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an *inward* change in order to an *universal* change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new *Jerusalem*, have a new heart and a new spirit, and that is necessary in order to their walking in *newness of life*. This is that *divine nature* which believers are by the promises made partakers of. (3.) That instead of a *heart of stone*, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a *heart of flesh*, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh. (4.) That since, besides our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will *cause them to walk in his statutes*, will not only shew them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom and will, and active powers for every good work. In order to this he will *put his Spirit within them*; as a teacher, guide and sanctifier. Note, God doth not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe, what we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us and put within us, *ye shall keep my judgments.* If God will do his part according to the promise we must do ours according to the precept. Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty, should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

2. God here promiseth that he will *take them into covenant with himself*. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, ver. 28. *Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.* It is not, if you will be my people I will be your God, though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people; but he hath chosen us and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works; *ye shall be my people, I will make you so, I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God.* And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, Rev. xxi. 3—7.

3. He promiseth that he will *bring about all that good for them*, which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy, (1.) Then they shall return to their possessions, and be settled again in them, ver. 28. *Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.* God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he hath said, *he will be so.* This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them, ver. 33. *In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance.* This is God's method of *mercy indeed*, first to part men from their sins, and then restore them to their comforts. (2.) Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, and *I will call for the corn, and will increase it*, ver. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still *growing*; and when he speaks the word the fruit both of the tree and of the field shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the products shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that feeds *mouths* will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a *reproach* to them that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness. But now *I will lay no famine upon you*; and none are under that rod, but it is God that *lays it on*. Then they shall receive no more reproach of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that; nor shall it ever be said that God is a master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long lain *desolate in the sight of all that passed by*, that looked upon it, some with contempt, and some with compassion, shall again be *tilled*, ver. 34. and having long lain fallow it will now be more fruitful. Observe, God will *call for the corn*, and yet they must *till the ground* for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede but to quicken and encourage our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the *hand of the diligent*, and all who pass by shall take notice of it with wonder, ver. 35. They shall say, see what a blessed change here is, how *this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden*; the desert turned again into a paradise. Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with; and in them he will be *honoured*. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared, ver. 38. to the large *flocks* of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie in waste shall be filled with *flocks of men*, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, Psalm lxx. 13. but like the *holy flock* which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed, when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock; to be presented to him for *living sacrifices*. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

4. He shews what shall be the *happy effects* of this blessed change. (1.) It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins, ver. 31. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves.* See here what

sin is; it is an *abomination*, a loathsome thing; that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the *first step* towards repentance; it is *remembering our own evil ways*, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them; we must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, *our own evil ways*, but our defects and infirmities, *our doings that were not good*, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is *self-loathing*, a holy shame and confusion of face, you shall *lothe yourselves in your own sight*, seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God. Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; but our quarrelling with ourselves is in order to our being upon good grounds reconciled to ourselves. And lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty, *then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities.* Note, The goodness of God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be assured of ourselves that ever we could sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed that will not be thus melted. (2.) It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God. Ver. 36. *Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spoke ignorantly of God* (for so all those do that speak ill of him) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better things and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to *rebuild* the most desolate cities, and to *replant* the most desolate countries; and that though the course of his favours to his people may be *obstructed* for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation, by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he hath done for them, *I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.* With us, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.

3. He proposeth these things to them, not as the recompence of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

1. Let them not think that they have deserved it. *Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you*, ver. 32. as before, ver. 22. *No be ye ashamed and confounded for your own ways.* God is *doing this*, all this which he hath promised; it is as sure to be done, as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then, (1.) They must *renounce the merit* of their own good works, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not for their sakes that it is done; so when God brought it into the world the first time, an express caveat was entered against this thought, Deut. ix. 4, 5, 6. *It is not for thy righteousness.* It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in shewing mercy he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts but his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed. *Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes*; which intimates that we are apt to entertain a good conceit of our own merits, and are hardly persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them. But one way or other God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace and not their goodness, his mercy and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, but unto him is all the glory due. (2.) They must *repent of the sin* of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God are not only not *merited*, but that they are a thousand times *forfeited*, and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be *ashamed and confounded* for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

2. Yet let them know that they must *desire and expect* it, ver. 37. *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.* God hath spoken and he will do it, and he will be *sought unto* for it, i. e. He requires that his people should *seek unto him*, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming towards them in ways of mercy. (1.) They must *pray* for it, for by prayer God is *sought unto* and *enquired after*. What is the matter of God's promises, must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must *ask*, and then God will *give him the heathen for his inheritance*; must *pray the Father*, and then he will *send the Comforter*; much more must we *ask* that we may receive. (2.) They must *consult* the oracles of God, and then also God is *sought unto* and *enquired after*; the mercy must be not an act of Providence only, but a *child of promise* and mercy; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God *enquired of* by Daniel in the name of the house of Israel, then when he was about to do these great things for them: he consulted the oracles of God, for he *understood by books*, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both *what* was to be expected, and *when*; and then he *set his face to seek God by prayer*, Dan. ix. 2, 3. Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us, and in both he must be *enquired of*.

CHAP. XXXVII.

The threatenings of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, were no so terrible but the promises of their restoration and deliverance from the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable; and as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes, for the awakening of a holy fear: so are these for the encouraging of an humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel: even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. (1.) That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might favour or further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here in vision compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men; which should be brought together and raised to life. The vision of this we have, ver. 1—10. And the explication of it, with its application to the present case, ver. 11—14. (2.) That they were so divided among themselves, too much of the old care between Judah and Ephraim remaining even in their captivity; but as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet, is foretold the happy coalition that should be at their return between the two nations of Israel and Judah, ver. 15—22. In which there was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet slides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be set up in the world with God's tabernacle in it, and of the glories and graces of that kingdom, ver. 23—28.

1. THE

1. **T**HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. 2. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley: and, lo, they were very dry. 3. And he said unto me, son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. 4. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. 9. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11. ¶ Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. 12. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. 14. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD hath spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

Here is, 1. The vision of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*, that we should have no thought of it, but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, some have urged from this vision; for (say they) otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, as the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith touching a former deliverance, *Isaiah vii.* 14. But whether it be a confirmation or no, it is without doubt a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, besides that which it is primarily intended to be a sign of. (1.) The resurrection of souls from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, *John v. 24, 25.* (2.) The resurrection of the gospel church, or any part of it, from an afflicted, persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. (3.) The resurrection of the body at the great day, especially the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

1. The deplorable condition of these dead bones; the prophet was made, (1.) To take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power, he was in vision carried out and set in the midst of the valley, probably the plain spoken of, *chap. iii. 22.* where God then talked with him, and it was full of bones, of dead men's bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here and the slain left unburied, till all the flesh was devoured or putrified, and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another, and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many, for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead; but that, lo, they were very dry; having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been moistened with marrow, *Job xxi. 24.* when they had been any while dead, lose all their moisture and are dry as dust: the body is now fenced with bones, *Job x. 11.* but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, *Rev. xi. 8, 9.* The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, *chap. xxxiv. 12-15.* for their destruction is final, but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of heaven, for there is hope in their end. (2.) He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself, *ver. 3.* Son of man, can these bones live? Is it a thing likely? Canst thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politics to restore a captive nation? No, saith the prophet, I know not how it should be done, but thou knowest. He doth not say, they cannot live, lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, Lord, thou knowest whether they can and whether they shall; and if thou dost not put life into them, for certain they cannot live. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be affected by any counsel or power but his own.

3. The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together, and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy, Ezekiel is ordered to prophecy upon these bones, *ver. 4.* and again, *ver. 9.* Prophecy so the wind. So he prophesied as he was commanded, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 10.*

(1.) He must preach, and he did so, and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached. (2.) He must pray, and he did so, and the dead bones were made to live in answer to prayer; for a spirit of life entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers prophecy upon the dry bones; say unto them, live: yea, say unto them, live; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again; O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord; but we call in vain; still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be sought by prayer. Note, Ministers must faithfully and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophecy upon dry bones seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick, and yet whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophecy as we are commanded, in the name of him who raised the dead, and is the fountain of life.

3. The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commissioned, in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and enrich his own appointments.

1. Ezekiel looked down and prophesied upon the bones in the valley, and they became human bodies. (1.) That which he had to say to them, was, that God would infallibly raise them to life. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Ye shall live, *ver. 5.* and again, Ye shall live, *ver. 6.* And he that speaks the word, will thereby do the work; he that saith they shall live, will make them alive. He will clothe them with skin and flesh, *ver. 6.* as he did at first, *Job x. 11.* He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not shortened. (2.) That which was presently done for them, was, that they were moulded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied, especially when he found what he said begin to take effect. Note, The opening, sealing and applying of the promises, is the ordinary means of our participation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision there was a noise, a word of command from heaven seconding what he said; or, it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed as ministers of the divine providence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their wings, *Ezek. i. 24.* and the sound of their going, *2 Sam. v. 24.* And, behold, a shaking of commotion among the bones; even dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to think of making use of that liberty, and getting ready to be gone, when there was a noise, behold, a shaking; when David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he bestirred himself; then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou me? Behold, a shaking of the dry bones, he trembled, and was astonished. But this was not all, The bones came together, bone to his bone, under a divine direction; and though there are in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of all those numerous slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place; but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones came together, and the displaced bones were knit together; the divine power supplying that to these dry bones, which in a living body every joint supplies. Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead, the scattered atoms shall be ranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and every bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylon came to their respective families, and all as it were by consent, to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the skin covered them, *ver. 8.* This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, *Ezra i. 4.* But still there was no breath in them, they wanted spirit and courage for such a difficult and hazardous enterprise as this was of returning to their own land.

2. Ezekiel then looked up, and prophesied to the wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain; as good have been still dry bones, as dead bodies: but as for God, his work is perfect, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: therefore breathe upon them that they may live. In answer to this request, the breath presently came into them, *ver. 10.* Note, The spirit of life is from God: he at first in the creation breathed into man the breath of life, and so he will at last in the resurrection. The dispirited despairing captives were wonderfully animated with their return, and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour. And then they stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army: not only living men, but effective men, fit for service in the wars; and formidable to all that gave them any opposition. Note, With God nothing is impossible. He can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and of dead and dry bones levy an exceeding great army to fight his battles and plead his cause.

2. The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity. These bones are the whole house of Israel, both the ten tribes and the two. See in this what they are and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair, to which they are now reduced, *ver. 11.* They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, Our bones are dried, our strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is all lost, every thing we looked for succour and relief from fails us, and we are cut off for our parts. Let who will cherish some hope we see no ground for any. Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been often frustrated, and all creature-confidences fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God, will keep them from dying away quite.

2. The height of prosperity, to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced. Therefore, because things are come thus to the last extremity, prophecy to them and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them. Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* Tell them (1.) That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are as it were buried alive; I will open your graves. Those shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, *Psal. cxli. 7.* but who are buried in the grave; though the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death, and cruel as the grave; yet it shall be conquered; God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, *Psal. lxxi. 20.* (2.) That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity. I will bring you into the land of Israel, *ver. 12.* and place you there, *ver. 14.* and will put my Spirit in you, and then ye shall live. Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And, (lastly) in all this God will be glorified

glorified, *ye shall know that I am the Lord*, ver. 13. that I have spoken it and performed it, ver. 14. Note, God's quickening the dead redounds more than any thing to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified above all his name; and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every title of it.

15. ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16. Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: 17. And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. 18. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meaneſt* by these? 19. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. 20. ¶ And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes, 21. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel: and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 24. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews, after their return to their own land, but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel times.

1. It is here promised that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual serviceableness; so that, whereas ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David unto Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared there had been some clashings between them, even in the land of their captivity: Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim; that now it should be no longer, but there shall be a coalition between them, and notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign; the prophet was to take *two sticks*, and write upon one for Judah, including Benjamin, those of the children of Israel, that were his companions; upon the other, for Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, ver. 16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into *one in his hand*, ver. 27. The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion as children do. Those that would know the meaning, should ask the meaning of the word of God which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the ministers *lips* should keep the knowledge hereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. It is a necessary question for grown people as well as children to ask, *what mean ye by this service*, by this sign? *Exod. xii. 26.* The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should become *one in the hand of God*, ver. 19. (1.) They shall be one, one nation, ver. 22. They shall have no separate interests, and consequently no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them; a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay beating and bruising one another, but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another, *Vis unita fortior.* Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity; then they shall become acceptable to their God, amiable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, *Iſa. xi. 13, 14.* (2.) They shall be one in God's hand; by his power they shall be united, and being by his hand brought together, his hand shall keep them together, so that they shall not fly off to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity, and his grace the cement of it.

VOL. II. NO. CXXXVIII.*

In him, in a regard to him, and in his service, and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one; *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt.* Note, Those are best united that are one in God's hand; whose union with each other results from their union with Christ, and their communion with God through him, *Eph. i. 10.* One in us, *John xvii. 21.* (3.) They shall be one in their return out of captivity, ver. 21. I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves; they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree to join together, in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint-sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension when they begin to come to themselves and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted, they will run all together. It was time for them to strengthen one another, when their oppressors were so busy to weaken and ruin them all. Likewise their being joint sharers in the favour of God, and the great and common deliverance wrought out for them all should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing loving times. (4.) They shall all be the subjects of one king, and so they shall become one. The Jews after their return were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further to the kingdom of Christ; he is that one king, in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, their becoming one fold under Christ, the one great shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. But Christ the partition wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them *twain* was made the new man, *Eph. ii. 14, 15.*

2. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even the taking away of their sin, ver. 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, those detestable defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin as sin will hate all sin. And those that are cured of their spiritual idolatry, their inordinate affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry; (1.) By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; I will save them out of all their dwelling places wherein they have sinned, because there they met with the occasion of sin and allurements to it. Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them or return to them; but to free ourselves out of them, as we would out of infected places: see *Zech. ii. 7.* *Rev. xviii. 6.* And it is a great mercy when God in his providence saves us out of the dwelling places where we have sinned, and keeps us from harm, by keeping us out of harm's way; in answer to our prayer. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* (2.) By changing the disposition of their mind; I will cleanse them, i. e. ver. 28. I will sanctify them, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols; whom God hath cleansed he will keep clean.

3. It is here promised that they shall be the people of God as their God, and the subjects and sheep of Christ their king and shepherd. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, ver. 23, 24. for the encouragement of the faith of Israel. They shall be my people to serve me, and I will be their God to serve them, and to make them happy. David my servant shall be king over them, to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and over-rule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their shepherd, to guide them and provide for them: Christ is David, Israel's king of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes them to walk in his judgments, and to keep his statutes.

4. It is here promised that they shall dwell comfortably, ver. 25, 26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel, for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. (1.) They shall have it by covenant; they shall come in again upon their old title, by virtue of the grant made unto Jacob God's servant. As Christ was David God's servant, so the church is Jacob his servant too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as *born in God's house*. He will make a covenant of peace with them, ver. 26. and in pursuance of that covenant he will place them and multiply them. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubly sweet when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. (2.) They shall come to it by prescription, it is the land wherein your fathers have dwelt, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify. It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore shall be theirs; they are beloved for their father's sakes. (3.) They shall have it entailed upon them and the heirs of their body, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. They shall dwell therein all their time, and never be turned out of possession, and they shall leave it for an inheritance to their children and their children's children for ever, who shall enjoy it when they are gone, the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them. (4.) They shall live under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives; my servant David shall be their prince for ever. This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said when he was brought into the world, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, *Luke i. 33.* Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all Christ's faithful subjects, that as his kingdom is everlasting, so he is an everlasting king, he lives to reign for ever; and as sure and as long as he lives and reigns they shall live and reign also. (5.) The charter by which they hold all their privileges indefeasible. God's covenant with them shall be an everlasting covenant; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting happiness.

5. It is here promised that God will dwell among them, and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed. I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; my tabernacle also shall be with them, ver. 26, 27. (1.) They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them; and his gracious residence among them: God will in very deed dwell with them upon the earth, for where his sanctuary is he is; when they profaned his sanctuary he took it from them, *Iſa. lxiv. 11.* but now they are purified God will dwell with them again. (2.) They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and so keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. (3.) They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught

of their Lord. (4.) Thus their covenant relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and they shall have the comfort of it.

6. Both God and Israel, shall have the honour of this among the heathen, ver. 26. Now the heathen observe how Israel had presented their own crown by their sins; and God has profaned it by his judgments; but then when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that *the Lord doth sanctify Israel*, has a title to them, and an interest in them more than other people, because his sanctuary is and shall be in the midst of them. Note, God designs the sanctification of those among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are they, who enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification, as that the heathen may know it is no less than the Almighty grace of God that sanctifies them. Such have God's sanctuary in the midst of them, the kingdom of God within them, in the principles of the spiritual life, and shall have it so for evermore in the enjoyments of an eternal life.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

This chapter and that which follows it are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them, and put them into a mighty fright: but their army should be routed, and their designs defeated; and this prophecy, it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity; whether in the struggles they had with the king of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters, but for want of that key we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by the prophet assured his people of happy times after their return to their own land; but lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted temporal prosperity; he here tells them, as Christ told his disciples to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This prophecy here relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, Rev. xx. 8. That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints; as the Old Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, Rev. xviii. But in both the Old Testament prophecies shall have taken the time comes in the Christian church. In this chapter we have intermixed, (1.) The attempt that Gog and Magog should make upon the land of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations, ver. 4-7. Their project and design in it, ver. 8-13. God's hand in it, ver. 4. (2.) The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel, ver. 15, 16, 18-20. (3.) The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the divine protection that Israel should be under, ver. 2-4. And again, ver. 14. (4.) The defeat that should be given to those enemies by the immediate hand of God, ver. 21-23. which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

1. **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophecy against him, 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 4. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6. Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. 7. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. 8. ¶ After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: 11. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12. To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

The critical expositors have enough to do here to enquire out Gog and Magog; we cannot pretend either to add to their observations, or to determine their controversies; Gog seems to be the king, and Magog the kingdom; so that God and Magog is like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria and Asia the Less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that *God is against him*, ver. 2, 3. Note, God doth not only see those that are now the enemies of his church, and let himself against them, but he foresees those that will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely *their wrath shall praise him*, and the remainder hereof he will restrain, Psalm lxxvi. 10. Let us observe here,

1. The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to; it is remarkable, that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel, it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws, and turn him back, ver. 4. that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus tender is God of the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened even before the trouble begins, he tells them it will end well.

2. The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment.

1. The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprise against Israel are many, and great, and mighty, ver. 5, 6. Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combinations against Israel. How are they increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, and bring a good train of artillery into the field; horses and horsemen, ver. 4. bravely equipped, with all sorts of armour, bucklers, and shields, for defence, and all handling swords for offence. Orders are given to make all imaginable preparation for this expedition, ver. 7. *Be thou prepared, and do thou prepare.* See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and lest that should not suffice, make further preparation, *thou and all thy company.* Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates. As commander in chief let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take them under his particular protection. The leaders of an army, instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings, should study to be a guard to them, and whenever they send them forth in danger, should contrive to support and cover them. This call to prepare, seems to be ironical, do thy worst, but I will turn thee back, like that, Isa. viii. 9. *Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.*

3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel, ver. 8. against the land that is brought back from the sword: It is not long since it was harassed with the sword of war, and it has been always wasted, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations, it has enjoyed comparatively but a short breathing-time, has scarce recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity, and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great, nay, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon. It is a people that dwell safely all of them, in unwalled villages, very secure, and having neither bars nor gates, ver. 11. It is a certain sign they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought they will offend others who do not take care to defend themselves, and it aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil against thy neighbour, while he dwells securely by thee, and has no distrust of thee. Prov. iii. 29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be secure till we come to heaven. It is not long since Israel was brought back from the sword of one enemy, and behold the sword of another is drawn against it; former troubles will not excuse us from further troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again, and therefore we must never boast, or be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view, in forming this project, is to enrich himself, and to make himself master not of the country, but of the wealth of it, to spoil and plunder it, and make a prey of it. At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about, things shall come into the mind of this enemy, and he shall think an evil thought, ver. 10. Note, All the mischief men do, and particularly the mischief they do to the church of God, ariseth from evil thoughts that come into their mind; ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, spiteful thoughts to those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against and condemned the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore in enmity to their religion he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy people they were, that they had gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land, ver. 12. And withal how weak they were, and how unable to make any resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and how much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword; these things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing on another, he came at last to this resolve, ver. 11, 12. *I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; yea that I will, it will cost me nothing to make them all my own; I will go and disturb them that are at rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us; they had none of these pretences to make war upon them: but purely to take a spoil, and to take a prey, ver. 12. in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity; as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay he knew them before they came into his mind, for he understandeth our thoughts afar off, Psalm cxxxix. 2.*

5. According to the project thus formed, he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel; and finds those that are ready to come in to his assistance upon the same prospects; ver. 9. *Thou shalt stand and come like a storm, with all the force and fury and surcels imaginable, and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it and to threaten it.* Thou, and not only all thy bands, all the force thou canst bring in the field, but many people with thee, such as are spoken of, ver. 13. Shobai and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon, and other maritime cities, they and their young lions that are greedy of spoil and live upon it, they shall say, *Art thou come to take the spoil of this land?* Yes, he is. And therefore they wish him success; or perhaps they envy him or grudge it him: Art thou come for riches, who art thyself so rich already? Or knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, seeing they would be baffled, and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself. Or if he be come to take the prey, they will come and join with him, and to his forces. When Lyfias, that was

was general of Antiochus's army, came against the Jews, the neighbour nations joined with him, 1 Mac. iii. 24. to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. *When thou seest a thief, then thou consentest with him.*

14. ¶ Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15. And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north-parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army; 16. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days, many years that I would bring thee against them. 18. And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. 19. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel. 20. So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. 23. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

. This latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled, for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded.

1. It is here again foretold, that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel, ver. 15. *Thou shalt come out of the north parts* (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel, ver. 16. These words, ver. 14. *When my people Israel shall dwell safely, shalt thou not know it*, may be taken two ways, either, (1.) As speaking his inducements to this attempt. Thou shalt have intelligence brought thee, how *securely* and therefore how *carelessly* the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a rich but what an *easy* prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them. Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the *occasion*, the small *occasion* perhaps that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those *first thoughts* from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make an ill use of; as here. Or, (2.) As speaking his disappointment in this attempt; which here, as before, the prophecy begins with; *When my people Israel dwells safely*, not in their own apprehension only but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt not thou be made to know it by the fruitlessness of thine endeavours to destroy them? Thou shalt soon find that there is no enchantment against Jacob, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no walls, nor bars, nor gates, they have God himself, a wall of fire round about them, and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye; whosoever meddles with them meddles to his own hurt. And it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that gathered themselves against Israel, said, *Let us take the spoil and take the prey*, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, Micah iv. 11, 12. *I will bring thee against my land*; that is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them; but if we understand what he aims at we shall be well reconciled even to this, it is, that the heathen may know me to be the only living and true God, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, i. e. in thy defeat and destruction before their eyes: that all the nations may see and say, *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens, for the help of his people*. Note, God therefore brings his people into danger and distress, that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance: and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail a while, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said, this shall be in the latter days, viz. in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so the mischief that Antiochus did to Israel was: but in the latter days of the New Testament church, another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

2. Reference is herein had to the predictions of the former prophets, ver. 17. *Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time?* of whom Moses spoke in his prophecy of the latter days? Deut. xxxii. 43. *He will render vengeance to his adversaries?* and David, Psal. ix. 15. *The heathen are junk down into the pit that they made*; and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviathan of whom Isaiah spake, Isa. xxvii. 1. that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, Joel iii. 1. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written; as they all had spoken and written to, that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same spirit.

3. It is here foretold that this furious formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel; and it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold, as usual, in figurative expressions which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of.

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader; when he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God's fury shall come up in his face, which is an allusion to the manner of men whose colour riseth in their faces when some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to shew their resentments of it, ver. 18. God will speak against them in his jealousy for his people, and in the fire of his wrath against his and their enemies, ver. 19. See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his making use of it to serve his own purposes, is very well consistent with his hatred of sin, and his displeasure against it: God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet when he comes against the land, God's fury comes up, and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath: If any ask, why doth he thus find fault? For who hath resisted his will? It is easy to answer, *Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*

2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation imaginable, ver. 19. there shall be a great shaking of them in the land of Israel, an universal concussion, ver. 20. such as shall affect the fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things, and much more the men that are upon the face of the earth, who sooner receive impressions of fear; there shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers and walls, those artificial heights, they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy. But it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God; all those things which they both raise themselves and stay themselves upon, shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them.

3. He shall be routed, and utterly ruined; both earth and heaven shall be armed against him. (1.) The earth shall muster up all its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will call for a sword against him, ver. 21. And he hath swords always at command, that are bathed in heaven, Isa. xxxv. 5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him, and rather than fail, every man's sword shall be against his brother, as in the day of Midian, Psalm lxxxiii. 9. The great men of Syria shall undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another. Note, God can and often doth make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their destroyer, will take the work into his hand that it may be done thoroughly, ver. 22. *I will plead against him with pestilence and blood*. Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against, he shews them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judgeth. (2.) The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them, *I will rain upon him an overflowing rain*, ver. 22. He comes like a storm upon Israel, ver. 9. But God will come like a storm upon him; will rain upon him great hailstones, as upon the Canaanites, Josh. x. 11. fire and brimstone, as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest, Psalm xi. 6. Thus the Gog and Magog in the New Testament shall be devour'd with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, Rev. xx. 9, 10. That will be the everlasting portion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of God's church and people.

4. God in all this will be glorified. The end he aimed at, ver. 16. shall be accomplished, ver. 23. *Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself*. Note, In the destruction of sinners God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and will do so to eternity. And if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself; and this we should desire and pray for daily, *Father, glorify thine own name*.

C H A P. XXXIX.

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog; in whose destruction God crowns his favour to his people Israel, which shines very bright after the scattering of that black cloud in the close of this chapter. Here is, (1.) An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before, ver. 1—7. (2.) An illustration of the vastness of that destruction in three consequences of it; the burning of their weapons, ver. 8—10. The burying of their slain, ver. 11—16. And the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied, ver. 17—23. (3.) A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel; in this and other his providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy he had yet in store for them, ver. 23—29.

1. **T**HEREFORE, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 2. And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured, 5. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. 6. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the holy One in Israel.

This

3. This prophecy begins, as that before, chap. xxxviii. 3, 4. *I am against thee, and I will turn thee back*; for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies, and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold, that God will bring this enemy from the north parts, as formerly the Chaldeans were fetched from the north. Jer. i. 14. (*Omne malum ab aquilone*) and long after the Roman empire over-run by the northern nations; that he will bring him upon the mountains of Israel, ver. 2. first, as a place of temptation, where the measures of his iniquity shall be filled up; and then, as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it that is here enlarged upon.

1. His soldiers shall be deformed, and so disabled to carry on their enterprise. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose? when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief: when God shall smite their bows out of their left hand, and their arrows out of their right, ver. 3. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

2. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle, ver. 4. *Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel*; there they sinned, and there they shall perish; even upon the holy mountains of Israel, for there brake in the arrows of the bow, Psalm lxxvi. 3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened and fattened, and made fruitful with the blood of the enemies. *Thou shalt fall upon the open field*, ver. 5. and shalt not be able even there to make thine escape; even upon the mountains he shall not find a pass that he shall be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He and his bands, his regular troops, and the people that is with him, that follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all fall with him. Note, Those that *coast in their lot* among wicked people, (Prov. i. 11.) that they may have one purse with them, must expect to take their lot with them, and take as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made, that but a sixth part shall be left, ver. 2. the other five shall be cut off. Never was an army so totally routed as this. And for its great infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, ver. 4. compare ver. 17. *Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it*. Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes (Antiochus was called Epiphanes the illustrious) and the most numerous armies fall to the ground, than any word of God; for he that hath spoken will make it good.

3. His country also shall be made desolate. *I will send a fire on Magog*, ver. 6. and among them that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the isles, i. e. the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land of Israel, but shall not only be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's right justly lose their own.

4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name, (1.) Among his people Israel: they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them; his providence concerning them, shall lead them into a better acquaintance with him; every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance. *I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people*. In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God should know more of him: we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name as a holy name. Know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, and that hates all sin. And then it follows, *I will not let them pollute my holy name any more*. Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it, and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men, first, to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole man; he first makes us to know his holy name, and so keeps us from polluting it, and engageth us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people and reforms them. *When the Almighty fed-tered kings for her she was white as snow in Salmon*, Psalm lxxviii. 11. (2.) Among the heathen; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that I am the Lord, the holy one in Israel. They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience, that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him and prospered.

8. ¶ Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken. 9. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel, shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-slaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: 10. So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forest; for they shall burn the weapons with fire; and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD. 11. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the noses of the passengers, and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude, and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog. 12. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them: and it shall be to them a renown in the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. 14. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it, after the end of seven months shall they search. 15. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17. ¶ And, thou son of man, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of

the field Assemble yourselves, and come: gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. 18. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.

Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain, ver. 8. *Behold it is come, and it is done*, it is as sure to be done when the time is come, as if it were done already; this is the day whereof I have long and often spoken, and though it has been long in coming, yet at length it is come. Thus it was said unto John, Rev. xxi. 6. *It is done*.

To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things instanced in as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat; we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword or struck a stroke: But,

1. They shall burn their weapons; their bows and arrows, which fell out of their hands, ver. 3. their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, their leading staves, truncheons, and half-pikes, every thing that is combustible; they shall not lay them up in their armories, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but burn them; not all at once for a bonfire, to what purpose would be that waste; but as they had occasion to use them for fuel in their houses, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the fields or forests for seven years together, ver. 10. such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads which they passed in their flight; the weapons were dry and sifter for fuel than green wood; and by saving their wood in their coppices and forests they gave it time to grow: though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them; as providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose when they that dwell in the cities of Israel came forth to spoil those that spoiled them, and make reprisals upon them, they found upon them silver and gold and ornaments, yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel; which is one of the necessities of human life; to teach us, to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well live without. And every time they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their fire-side) they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

2. They shall bury their dead. Usually after a battle when many are slain, the enemy desires time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general that there shall not be enow of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel, that it would be a work of time to find them out. And therefore it is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying of them; namely, the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea, either the salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passing and re-passing of travellers between Egypt and Chaldea; there shall be such a multitude of dead bodies, putrifying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers that go that way shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies our's are, when the soul has been a little while from them the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous or more noxious. There therefore where the greatest number lay slain shall the burying-place be appointed. In the place where the tree falls, there let it lie. And it shall be called, The valley of Hamon-gog, i. e. of the multitude of Gog, for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance; how numerous the forces of the enemies were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel.

3. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than seven months, ver. 22. which is a farther intimation, that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many; and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they may cleanse the land from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corps unburied in it; for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree should be speedily taken down and buried, Deut. xxi. 23. This is an intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin, the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.

4. Great numbers shall be employed in this work. All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a helping hand to it, ver. 13. Note, Every one should contribute the utmost he can in his place towards the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy which every man should take up arms against, *In publico discrimine unusquisque homo miles est*. And whoever shall assist in this work, it shall be to them a renown; though the office of grave-makers or common scavengers of the country seem but mean, yet when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion when those that profess it are ready to do every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified. Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will see their good works.

works, and glorify their Father, Matt. v. 16. And when God is honoured, he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollution of the country, and therefore they shall appoint men of continual employment, that should apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land was thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise that which is every one's work would soon become nobody's work. Note, Those that are engaged in public work, especially for the cleansing and reforming a land, ought to be men of continual employment, men that will stick to what they undertake and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and those that will do good according to their opportunities will find themselves continually employed.

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what public nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance; they that pass through the land, though they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, yet they will give notice of those that they find unburied. If they but discover a bone they will set up a sign, that the buriers may come and bury it; and that till it is buried others may take heed of touching it; for which reason the sepulchres among the Jews were whitened, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves; who must not think themselves unconcerned in a common calamity or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it?

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not countenance any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the bone of a man that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it, private information, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed them for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called Hazonah, the multitude; O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all this care, with all this pains, ver. 16. Note, After conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites, to purify themselves, Numb. xxxi. 24. Having received special favours from God, Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

3. These birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcases of the slain while they remain unburied, and it shall be impossible to prevent it, ver. 17, &c. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Rev. xix. 17, &c. which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, ver. 17, it is to the fowl of every wing, and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcases, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog, let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast, so the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God executed upon sin and sinners are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people; when God brake the head of Leviathan, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Psalm lxxiv. 19. The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast, when he sees the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked. This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel, these are the high places, the altars, where God had been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made. They shall eat the flesh of the mighty; and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, ver. 18, 19. (1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his maker. (2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams and bullocks, and great goats all of them fallings of Bashan. It is the blood of the princes of the earth, that they shall regale themselves with: what a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey. (3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of God's servants, Psalm lxxix. 2. or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full, ver. 19, 20. ye shall eat fat and drink blood, which are satiating surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly. You shall be filled at my table. Note, God keeps a table for the inferior creatures: he provideth food for all flesh; and the eyes of all wait upon him; and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he hath prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots, i. e. those that ride in the chariots, mighty men and men of war, who triumphed over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, Prov. xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil purifies sinners even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey, is but a type and sign of those terrors that after death shall prey upon their consciences, (which the poetical fictions represented by a vulture continually pecking at the heart) and this shame but an earnest of the everlasting shame and contempt they shall rise to.

4. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord, ver. 21. All the heathen shall see and observe my judgment, that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This principle shall be admitted and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not or read not his written word, by the judgments which he executeth.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God. Ver. 22. The house of Israel shall know abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. (1.) He will be so from that day and forward: God's present mercies are pledges and assurances of further mercies. If God evidence to us that he is our God, he assures us that he will never leave us; this God is our God for ever and ever. (2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question, whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events

of this day shall silence their doubts, and the matter being thus settled and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23. ¶ And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. 24. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26. After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. 27. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations: 28. Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and hath reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

1. God will let the heathen know the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify their mistake concerning them, who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel, as unable to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God upon their reformation and return to him turned again their captivity; and brought them back to their own land, and upon their perseverance in their reformation wrought such great salvations for them, as that from the attempts of Gog upon them, that it will be made to appear even to the heathen, that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their reflection; that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection. Ver. 23, 24. The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours; because they trespassed against God. That was the true reason why God hid his face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions. Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God, when the world is made to know, (1.) That God punisheth sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, Amos iii. 2. It is the praise of justice to be impartial. (2.) That when God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, Isa. x. 7—xlii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. (3.) That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod, but he returns in mercy to them.

2. God will give his own people to know, what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into, ver. 25, 26. Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.

1. Why now? Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; (1.) Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; now will I be jealous for my holy name, that we may no longer be reproached. (2.) Because now they repent of their sins; they have borne their shame and all their trespasses; when sinners repent and take shame to themselves, God will be reconciled and put honour upon them. It is particularly pleasing to God, that these penitents look a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the divine protection they were under there, shall be improved as an aggravation of the sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet or disturbance, if they had continued in the way of their duty. Nay, therefore they trespassed, because they dwelt safely: outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that it is an inlet to all sin, Psalm lxxiii. Now this they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God hath justly brought them into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences, God will bring again their captivity: And,

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies hands, and brought them home again:

(1.) Then God will have the praise of it; I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, ver. 2. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in their restoration, and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then they shall have the benefit of it, ver. 28. They shall know that I am the Lord their God. Note, The providences of God concerning his people, that are designed for their good, have the grace of God going along with them, to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God in all, and then they do them good. They shall eye him as the Lord and their God, (1.) In their calamities, that it was he that caused them to be led into captivity; and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. (2.) In their comfort, that it is he that has gathered them to their own land, and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that are concerning us, if we look up to

God in all, we may come to acquaint ourselves better with his various attributes and designs.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, ver. 29. (3.) God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to prevent their departures from him and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then, (2.) He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had done: He will never turn from doing them good, and in order to that he will effectually provide that they shall never turn from doing him service. Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that in order to that he would never take his holy Spirit away from us, Psalm li. 11.

C H A P. XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in vision, chap. xlvii.

1. are a proper representation of this prophecy. Hitherto the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters are risen, and are become a river which cannot be passed over. Here is one continued vision beginning at this chapter, to the end of the book, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions of scripture in all the book of God. The Jews will not allow any to read it till they are thirty years old, and tell those who do read it, that though they cannot understand every thing in it, yet when Elias comes he will explain it. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have owned themselves at a loss what to make of it, and what use to make of it; but because it is hard to be understood, we must not therefore throw it by, but humbly search concerning it, get as far as we can into it, and as much as we can out of it; and when we despair of satisfaction in every difficulty we meet with, bless God that our salvation doth not depend upon it, but things necessary are plain enough; and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us. These chapters are the more to be regarded, because the two last chapters of the Revelation seem to have a plain allusion to them, as Rev. xx. has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog. Here is the vision of a glorious temple in this chapter and chap. xli. and xlii. Of God's taking possession of it, chap. xliii. Orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple, chap. xliiv. The division of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince both in his government of the people and his worship of God, chap. xlv. and further instructions for him and the people, chap. xlii. And after the vision of the holy waters, we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city, chap. xlvii. xlviii. Some make this to represent what had been during the flourishing state of the Jewish church; how glorious Solomon's temple was in its best days, that the captives might see what they had lost by sin, and might be the more humbled. But that seems not probable. The general scope of it I take to be, (1.) To assure the captives that they should not only return to their own land and be settled there, which had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should have, and therefore should be encouraged to build, another temple, which God would own, and where he would meet them and bless them. That the ordinances of worship should be revived, and the sacred priesthood should there attend; and though they should not have a king to live in such splendour as formerly, yet they should have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision) that should countenance the worship of God amongst them, and should himself be an example of diligent attendance upon it. And that prince, priests and people, should have a very comfortable settlement and subsistence in their own land. (2.) To direct them to look further than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of David, because he was the man that projected the building of the temple; and who should set up a spiritual temple, even the gospel church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's temple, and which should continue to the end of time. And the dimensions of these visionary buildings are so large, the new temple bigger than the old Jerusalem, and the new Jerusalem bigger than all the land of Canaan, plainly intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must be spiritually understood. And the gospel temple erected by Christ and his apostles, was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foretold the spiritual worship that should be performed in gospel times, more agreeable to the nature both of God and man: and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishment; and some think in some happy and glorious state of the gospel church on this side heaven, in the latter days.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A general account of this vision of the temple and city, ver. 1—4. (2.) A particular account of it entered upon, and a description given, (1.) Of the outside wall, ver. 5. (2.) Of the east gate, ver. 6—19. (3.) Of the north gate, ver. 20—23. (4.) Of the south gate, ver. 24—31. and the chambers and other appurtenances belonging to these gates. (5.) Of the inner court, both towards the east and towards the south, ver. 32—38. (6.) Of the tables, ver. 39—43. (7.) Of the lodgings for the singers and the priests, ver. 44—47. (8.) Of the porch of the house, ver. 48, 49.

1. **I**N the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. 2. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was the frame of a city on the south. 3. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brassy, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. 4. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither; declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision. It was in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity, ver. 1. which some compute to be the thirty-third year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the fourteenth year after the city was smitten. See how seasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, then when they were in the depths of their distress; and an assurance of the return of the morning, when they were in the midnight of their captivity. Then the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither, to Jerusalem, now it was in ruins, desolate and deserted, a piteous sight to the prophet.

2. The scene where it was laid. The prophet was brought in the visions of God to the land of Israel, ver. 2. And it was not the first time he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem to see it in its iniquity and shame, chap. viii. 3. here he is carried thither to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now it was quite depopulated, was dismal. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view this land, which was now a second time a land of promise, not yet in possession. From the top of this mountain he saw as the frame of a city, the plan and model of it; but this city was a temple as large as a city. The new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 22. had no temple herein; this here is all temple, which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heaven men dwell with God. Both these are framed in the counsel of God, framed by infinite wisdom, and all very good.

3. The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brassy, ver. 3. not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with and access to the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 13. His appearing like brassy speaks both his brightness and his strength. John in vision saw his feet like unto fine brassy, Rev. i. 13.

The dimensions of this city or temple and the several parts of it were taken with a line of flax and a measuring reed, or rod, ver. 3. as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule, and those that would let others into the knowledge of it must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture; the pattern in the mount. That is the line and the measuring reed that is in the hand of Christ; with that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that, for then peace is upon the Israel of God, when they walk according to that rule.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, ver. 5. (1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged, ver. 4. Behold with thine eyes all that is shewed thee; do not only see it but look intently upon it; and hear with thine ears all that is said to thee, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to set thine heart upon it; attend with a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind. What we see of the works of God, and what we hear of the word of God, will do us no good unless we set our hearts upon it, as those that reckon ourselves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage to our souls by it. (2.) He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it, therefore he receives that he may give. Thus the Revelation of Jesus Christ was lodged in the hands of John that he might signify it to the churches, Rev. i. 1. And because he is to declare it as a message from God, he must therefore be fully apprised of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others ought to study it well themselves, and set their hearts upon it. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself, and declare it to the house of Israel, is because to this intent he is brought hither, and has it shewed him. Note, When the things of God are shewed us, it concerns us to consider to what intent they are shewed us; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God in shewing us such things in vain.

4. And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand-breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height one reed. 6. ¶ Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad; and the other threshold of the gate which was one reed broad. 7. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers were five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within was one reed. 8. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was inward. 10. And the little chambers of the gate eastward, were three on this side, and three on that side; they three were of one measure, and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12. The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side: and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. 13. He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. 14. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the posts of the court round about the gate. 15. And from the face of the gate of the entrance, unto the face of the porch of the inner gate were fifty cubits. 16. And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows were round about inward:

ward: and upon *each* post were palm-trees. 17. Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there* were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. 18. And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates was the lower pavement. 19. Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward. 20. ¶ And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. 21. And the little chambers thereof were three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh towards the east; and they went up into it by seven steps; and the arches thereof were before them. 23. And the gate of the inner court was over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. 24. After that he brought me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures. 25. And *there* were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26. And *there* were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general was mentioned before, *ver.* 3. Here we are told, *ver.* 5. what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was measured by it. It was *six cubits long*, reckoning not by the common cubit, but the *cubit of the sanctuary*, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit this holy house should be measured, and that was an hand-breadth, *i. e.* four inches longer than the common cubit, the common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two, see *chap.* xliii. 17. yet some of the critics contend, that this *measuring-reed* was but six common cubits in length, and one hand-breadth added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an account,

1. Of the *outer wall* of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high, which notes the separation between the church and the world on every side; and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this vast thickness will not secure it God himself will be a *wall of fire* round about it, whoever attacks it, it is at their peril.

2. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the *court of the Gentiles*: some think, because in gospel times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church, that their court should be left *unmeasured*, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be *unnumbered*, *Rev.* vii. 9—11, 12.

1. He begins with the *east-gate*, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple; the holy of holies being at the *west* end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped towards the *east*. Now in the account of this gate observe,

(1.) That he went up to it by *stairs*, *ver.* 6. for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to *worship* God we must *ascend*; so is the call, *Rev.* iv. 1. Come up hither; *Sursum corda*. Up with your hearts.

(2.) That the chambers adjoining to the gates were but *little chambers*, about ten feet square, *ver.* 7. These were for those to lodge in who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such who are made spiritual priests to God to content themselves with *little chambers*, and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court, we have reason to be thankful though it be in a *little chamber*, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers as they were each of them *four-square*, noting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, for they were each of them one reed long, and one reed broad, so they were all of *one measure*, that there might be an *equality* among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very *many*; for in our Father's house there are *many mansions*, *John* xiv. 2. in his house above, and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, *Psal.* xxvii. 4, 5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the *great temple*, the universal church, which are and must be framed by the Scripture line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes the measure of, that is, takes cognisance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

(5.) It is said, *ver.* 14. He made also the posts. He that now measured them was the same that made them, for Christ is the builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his *making* of them, for no account is made of them farther than they agree with that, to the *law* and to the *testimony*.

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which some think was literally fulfilled, when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, *i. e.* thirty yards and more, *Ezra* vi. 3.

(7.) Here were windows to the *little chambers*, and windows to the *posts* and *arches*, *i. e.* to the cloisters below, and *windows round about*, *ver.* 16. to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated; divine revelation is let into it for instruction, direction, and comfort, to those that dwell in God's house; light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the *little chambers*: even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church,

shall have light afforded them: *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*. But they are *narrow windows*, as those in the temple, *1 Kings* vi. 4. The discoveries made to the church on earth are but narrow and scanty, compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly.

(8.) Divers courts are here spoken of; an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only entered; which some think may put us in mind "Of the diversities of gifts and graces, and offices in the several members of Christ's mystical body here; as also of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven; as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several magnitudes in the fixed firmament." *English Annotations*. Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things, but to a child of God a day in any of his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. These courts had porches or piazzas round them for the shelter of those that attended in them from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God, we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection; that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be to us a covert from the storm and tempest, *Isa.* iv. 5, 6.

(9.) On the posts were *palm-trees* engraven, *ver.* 16. to signify that the righteous should flourish like the palm-tree, in the courts of God's house, *Psal.* xciii. 12. The more they are depressed with the burden of affliction, the more strongly do they grow, as they say of the *palm-trees*. It likewise intimates the saints' victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies; they have palms in their hands, *Rev.* vii. 4. but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the posts of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour; *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph*. Nay believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out, and shall have his name engraven on them, which will be their brightest ornament and honour, *Rev.* iii. 12.

(10.) Notice is here taken of the pavement of the court, *ver.* 17. The word intimates that the pavement was made of *porphyry-stone*, which was of the colour of burning coals; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of the world, should be put and kept under our feet when we draw near to God and are attending on him. The stars are as it were the *burning coals*, or stones of a fiery colour, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be so bright and glittering; how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2. The gates that looked towards the north, *ver.* 20. and towards the south, *ver.* 24. with their appurtenances, are much the same with that towards the east, after the measure of the first gate, *ver.* 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in *Exodus*. And of the temple in the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, to signify the special notice God doth take, and his ministers should take of all that belong to his church; his delight is in them, his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe,

1. This temple had not only a gate towards the east, to let into it the children of the east, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the north, and another to the south, for the admission of the poorer and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has twelve gates, three towards each quarter of the world, *Rev.* xxi. 13. for many shall come from all parts to sit down there, *Matt.* viii. 11.

2. To these gates they went up by steps, seven-steps, *ver.* 22—26. which, as some observe, may mind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another. Going from step to step, from strength to strength, still pressing forwards towards perfection. Upward, towards heaven, the temple above.

27. And *there* was a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits. 28. And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gates according to these measures; 29. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there* were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30. And the arches round about were five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. 31. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps. 32. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east, and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were according to these measures: and *there* were windows therein and in the arches thereof round about; it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side and on that side, and the going up to it had eight steps. 35. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured it according to these measures; 36. The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37. And the posts thereof were toward the outer court: and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. 38. And the chambers and the entries thereof were by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt offering.

In these verses we have a delineation of the *inner court*; The survey of the outer court ended with the south-side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south-side, *ver.* 27. proceeds to the east, *ver.* 32. and so to the north, *ver.* 35. for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court towards the west; it should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters towards the west, *1 Chron.* ix. 24—xxvi. 8.

But Jofaphus faith, that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe,

1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, and the galleries or rows round the court the same. The very engraving on the posts the same. The work of grace, and its workings, are the same for substance in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike precious, though it be not alike strong. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for all they are brethren, and bear the same image.

2. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven steps, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight steps. This is expressly taken notice of, ver. 31—34—37: to signify, that the nearer we approach to God, the more we should rise above this world and the things of it. The people that worshipped in the outer court must rise seven steps above other people, but the priests that attended in the inner court, must rise eight steps above them; must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39. ¶ And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to lay thereon the burnt offering, and the sin offering and the trespass offering. 40. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north-gate, were two tables, and on the other side, which was at the porch of the gate were two tables. 41. Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew their sacrifices. 42. And the four tables were of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. 43. And within were hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the offering. 44. ¶ And without the inner gate were the chambers of the fingers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect was toward the south: one at the side of the east gate having the prospect toward the north. 45. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south is for the priests the keepers of the charge of the house. 46. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him. 47. So he measured the court an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad four square; and the altar that was before the house. 48. And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts; one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account,

1. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the inner court. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court, till chap. xliii. 13. But because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court; for till we come to partake of the table of the Lord, we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our altar, that sanctifies every gift. Here were eight tables provided whereon to lay the sacrifices, ver. 41. We read not of any tables for this purpose, either in the tabernacle, or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times; and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up those sacrifices. Here were the shambles for the altar: Here were the dressers on which they laid the flesh of the sacrifice, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar, ver. 38. and there also they washed the burnt-offerings, ver. 38. To intimate, that before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness; must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices, and so compass God's altar.

2. The use that some of the chambers mentioned before were put to. (1.) Some were for the singers, ver. 44. It should seem they were first provided for before any other that attended this temple-service, to intimate, not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordinance, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise; and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel-times, Psalm xcvi. 1.—xcviii. 1. Christians should be singers. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. (2.) Others of them were for the priests; both those that kept the charge of the house, to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, ver. 45. and those that kept the charge of the altar, ver. 46. that came near to the Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house shall enjoy the comforts of it.

3. Of the inner court, the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, ver. 47. The altar that was before the house was placed in the midst of this court; over against the three gates, which standing in a direct line with the three gates of the outer court, when the gates were set open, all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the ser-

vice done at the altar. Christ is both our altar and our sacrifices, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is salvation in the midst of the earth, Psalm lxxiv. 12. to be looked unto from all quarters.

4. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, ere we enter into the house. Between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, Joel ii. 17. In the porch, besides the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz; He will establish; in him is strength, ver. 49. In the gospel church, every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

CHAP. XLI.

An account was given of the porch of the house in the close of the foregoing chapter, this brings us to the temple itself; the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors, and occasions differences among them. Those must most consult them, who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; it shall suffice us to observe, (1.) The dimensions of the house, the posts of it, ver. 1. the door, ver. 2. the wall and the side-chambers, ver. 3, 6. the foundations and wall of the chambers, and their doors, ver. 8—11. the house itself, ver. 13. (2.) The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, ver. 3, 4. (3.) An account of another building over against the separate place, ver. 12—15. (4.) The manner of the building of the house, ver. 7—16, 17. (5.) The ornaments of the house, ver. 18, 19, 20. (6.) The altar of incense, and the table, ver. 22. (7.) The doors between the temple and the oracle, ver. 23—26. There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us, that there is so much in these descriptions dark and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarce intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time, we may suppose all this in the literal sense of it was easy enough.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side; and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits. 3. Then went he inwards, and measured the posts of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits. 4. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple, and he said unto me, This is the most holy place. 5. After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of every side chamber, four cubits round about the house on every side. 6. And the side chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which was of the house for the side chambers round about that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7. And there was an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side chambers, for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. 8. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers were a full reed of six great cubits. 9. The thickness of the wall, which was for the side chambers without was five cubits: and that which was left was the place of the side chambers that were within. 10. And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11. And the doors of the side chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left was five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the conduct of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts, he was at length brought to the temple, ver. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led farther into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright privilege, of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him, by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, celestial temple, and employing him to transcribe a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of his temple, which his hearers understood of this second temple at Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body, John iii. 19—21. and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the house

of God, 1 Tim. iii. 15. and all the members of that body, which are *living temples*, in whom the Spirit dwells.

3. The very *posts* of this temple, the door-posts were as far one from the other, and consequently the door was as wide as the whole breadth of the tabernacle of Moses, *ver. 1. viz.* twelve cubits, *Exod. xxvi. 16—22—25*. In comparison with what had been under the law, we may say that *wide is the gate* which leads into the church; the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, *ver. 4*. For the new Jerusalem is exactly four-square, *Rev. xxi. 16*. noting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, *ver. 7*. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have *fast hold*: though God builds *high* yet he builds *firm*; yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening another; they had hold, but not *in the wall of the house*. By this spreading gradually, the *side chambers* that were on the height of the house, i. e. in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits; whereas the lowest were but *four*; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12. Now the building that was before the separate place at the end toward the west was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. 13. So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long; 14. Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits. 15. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which was behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court; 16. The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, cieled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered; 17. To that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure. 18. And it was made with cherubims and palm trees, so that a palm tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces; 19. So that the face of a man was toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about. 20. From the ground unto above the door were cherubims and palm trees made, and on the wall of the temple. 21. The posts of the temple were squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. 22. The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood: and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the LORD. 23. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24. And the doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. 25. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there were thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 26. And there were narrow windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Here is, 1. An account of a building that was before the separate place, i. e. before the temple, at the end toward the west, *ver. 12*. which is here measured and compared, *ver. 13*. with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, *ver. 15*. and its galleries, or chambers, belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, *ver. 15, 16, 17*. But what use was to be made of this other building, we are not told; perhaps in this vision, it signified the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with *cherubims and palm-trees*, placed alternately, as in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have *two faces*; the face of a man towards the palm-tree on one side, and the face of a young lion towards the palm-tree on the other side, *ver. 19*. These seem to represent the angels that have more than the wisdom of man, and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph, which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1 Cor. xi. 10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple and of the sanctuary, they were *squared*, *ver. 21*. not round like pillars; and the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple; but here it was full as broad; for in gospel times the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest than it had been under the Old Testament, *Heb. ix. 8*. and therefore the door wider. These doors

are described, *ver. 23, 24*. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their door, and they were *two-leaved*, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an altar of wood, *ver. 22*. No mention is made of its being overlaid with gold; but sure it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned; unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else, it intimates that the incense to be offered in the gospel temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table; this is the table that is before the Lord. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do is to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

6. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, *ver. 25, 26*. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold, or silver, or costly array, but with the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible.

C H A P. XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of; and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, 1. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, *ver. 1—13*. and the uses for which they were designed, *ver. 13, 14*. 2. A survey of the whole compass of ground, which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, *ver. 15—20*.

1. THEN he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north. 2. Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. 3. Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the utter court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. 4. And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north. 5. Now the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6. For they were in three stories, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. 7. And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits. 8. For the length of the chambers that were in the utter court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were an hundred cubits. 9. And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court. 10. The chambers were in the thickness in the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11. And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they: and all their goings out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. 12. And according to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. 13. ¶ Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass-offering; for the place is holy. 14. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there shall they lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy: and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

The prophet hath taken a very exact view of the temple, and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court, to observe the chambers that were in that square.

1. Here is a description of these chambers; which (as that which went before) seems to us very perplexed and intricate, through our unacquaintance with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances, will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must both before and after our attendance there enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read and meditate, and pray to our Father in secret; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many; there were three stories of them, and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, *ver. 5, 6*. There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple night or day, *Luke ii. 37*. In my Father's house are many mansions, in his house on earth there are so; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer public worship before private: *The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, and so must we. And to refer our private worship to the public; our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them, as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad, ver. 4. in which those that had lodgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both; but man is made for society, and Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was high-priest in the second temple, that God will give him places to walk in among them that stand by, Zech. iii. 7.

2. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, ver. 13, 14.

1. They were for the priests, that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents; therefore they are called *holy chambers*, because they were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministrations. Those that have public work to do for God and the souls of men, have need to be much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their *profiting may appear*; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, i. e. those parts of the offering which fell to their share, and there they were to eat them, they and their families, in a religious manner, for the place is holy; and thus they must have a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar; their linen ephods, coats, girdles, and bonnets. We read of the providing of priests garments after their return out of captivity, Neh. vii. 70, 72. When they had ended their service at the altar they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation; but they must put on other garments, such as other people wear when they approached to those things which were for the people, i. e. to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law, and to answer their enquiries. Their holy garments must be laid up, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

15. Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. 16. He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 17. He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 18. He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 19. ¶ He turned about to the west-side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. 20. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread doth extend, and that also is here measured and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way five hundred reeds, ver. 16, 17, 18, 19. each reed about three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground lying square, was above eight miles round. Thus large were the suburbs (as I may call them) of this mystical temple; signifying the great extent of the church in gospel times, when all nations shall be disciples, and the kingdoms of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room shall be made in God's courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, *Isaiah* xlix. 18.—lx. 4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment, when the *fulness of the Gentiles shall come in* and all Israel shall be saved.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large: It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary and the profane place; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were unclean, and to separate between the precious and the vile. Note, A difference is to be put between common and sacred things; between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a distance to be put between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

C H A P. XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, the gospel church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe in this and the next chapter the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old Testament services. In this chapter we have, (1.) Possession taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, ver. 1—6. (2.) A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people, upon condition of their return to and continuance in the instituted way of his worship, and their abandoning of idols and idolatry, ver. 7—12. (3.) A description of the altar of burnt-offerings, ver. 13—17. (4.) Directions given for the consecration of that altar, ver. 18—27. And Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

1. **A**FTERWARD he brought me to the gate even the gate that looketh toward the east: 2. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3. And

it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. 5. So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. 6. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted into a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, *Come up hither*. He hath seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead bodies he had seen in vision, chap. xxxvii. that had no breath, till the spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God's glory.

1. He has a vision of the glory of God, ver. 2. The glory of the God of Israel, that God who is in covenant with Israel, and whom they serve and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel. This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads toward the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's star was seen in the east, and he is that other angel that ascendeth out of the east, Rev. vii. 2. For he is the morning-star, he is the sun of righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. (1.) The power of his word which he heard. His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of purling streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, Rev. i. 15.—xiv. 2. Christ's gospel, in the glory of which he shines, was to be proclaimed aloud, the report of it to be heard far; to some it is a favour of life, to others of death, according as they are. (2.) The brightness of his appearance which he saw. The earth shined with his glory; for God is light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none hath seen or can see it. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church, shines on the world. When God appeared for David, the brightness that was before him dispersed the clouds, *Psal.* xlviii. 12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here, he observed to be the same with the vision he saw, when he first received his commission, chap. i. 4. according to that by the river Chebar, ver. 3. because God is the same he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. It was the same (saith he) with that which I saw when I came to destroy the city, i. e. to foretell the city's destruction; which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it. As a judge, in God's name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is and will be glorified. He kills and he makes alive; he wounds and he heals, Deut. xxxii. 39. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance; he hath smitten, and he will bind up. *Una eademque manus vulnus aperitque tulit.*

2. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory, he fell upon his face, ver. 3. as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or rather as one willing to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverent adoration. But the Spirit took him up, ver. 5. when the glory of the Lord was come into the house, ver. 4. that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See chap. x. 18, 19—xi. 23. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with everlasting loving-kindness. God's glory filled the house as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, *Exod.* xl. 33. 1 Kings viii. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Schechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel church and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now with open face behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

3. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord, as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle, *Lev.* i. 1. I heard him speaking to me out of the house, ver. 6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive divine oracles. The man stood by me; we could not bear to hear the voice of God any more than to see the face of God, if Jesus Christ did not stand by us as mediator. Or if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he stood by, and gave way; having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for to the principalities and powers, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, *Eph.* iii. 10. The man stood by him to conduct him thither where he might receive further discoveries, chap. xlv. 1.

7. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places. 8. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. 10. ¶ Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. 11. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and

and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

God doth here in effect renew his covenant with his people Israel upon his retaking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement. But look further to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

1. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This conviction is spoken to them, to make way for the comforts designed them. Though God gives and upbraids not, it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy carriage towards him. Let them now remember therefore,

(1.) That they had formerly defiled God's holy name, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, ver. 7. They and their kings had brought contempt on the religion they professed, and their relation to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called their kings, for so Moloch signifies; or lords, for so Baal signifies; but were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name by their abominations. And what were they? It was in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts by my posts, i. e. adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, Isa. xxix. 13. Or rather setting up altars to their idols even in the courts of the temple, than which a more impudent affront could not be put upon the Divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation-wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their wills in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right; and see what injury they do to themselves; for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it; though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, there was but a wall between me and them, (so it is in the margin) so that it might have been expected they should have acquainted themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly. Note, It often proves too true, The nearer the church the farther from God. They were by profession in covenant with God, and yet they had defiled the place of his throne, and of the soles of his feet, i. e. his temple, where he did both reside and reign. Jerusalem is called the city of the great king, Psalm xlviii. 2. and his footstool, Psalm xcix. 5.—cxviii. 7. Note, When God's ordinances are profaned, his holy name is polluted.

(2.) That for this God had had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name fall under his just displeasure.

2. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and in order to that to be ashamed of their iniquities, ver. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, now they have sinned so severely for it, and now God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have none more to do with them, that they may not again forfeit the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome carcases of their kings, far from me; from being a provocation to me. This was seasonable counsel now the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, (1.) If they see that platform they will surely be ashamed of their sins, ver. 10. when they see what mercy God has in store for them, notwithstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous carriage towards him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves, and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them, and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, (2.) If they be ashamed of their sins, they shall surely see more of the platform, ver. 11. If they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God, shall see and know more of it. And then, and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours when we are truly humbled for our own follies. Shew them the form of the house, let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal shew them the ordinances and laws of it. Note, With the foresight of our comforts, it is fit we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must acquaint ourselves with the rules of it. Shew them these ordinances that they may keep them and do them. Note, Therefore we are made to know our duty that we may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

3. He promiseth that they shall be such as they should be, and then he will be to them such as they would have him to be, ver. 7. (1.) The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name. This is pure gospel. The precept of the law saith, you must not defile my name: the grace of the gospel saith you shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant is promised in the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40. (2.) Then I will dwell in the midst of them for ever; and the same again, ver. 9. God secures to us his good will by confirming in us his good work. If we do not defile his name, we may be sure he will not depart from us.

4. The general law of God's house is laid down, ver. 12. That whereas formerly only the chancel or sanctuary was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so. The whole limit thereof, including all the courts and all the chambers, shall be as the most holy place; signifying, that in gospel times, (1.) The whole church shall have the privilege of the holy of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now under the gospel boldness to enter into the holiest, Heb. x. 10. with this advantage, that whereas the high-priest entered in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter into the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and whatever we are we have through him access to the Father. (2.) The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press towards the perfection of holiness, as he

which hath called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel-times more than ever. Behold, this is the law of the house, let none expect the protection of it that will not submit to this law.

13. ¶ And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: the cubit is a cubit and an hand-breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar. And from the bottom upon the ground even to the lower settle shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle even to the greater settle shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit. 15. So the altar shall be four cubits; and from the altar and upward shall be four horns. 16. And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17. And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof: and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east. 18. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offering thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin-offering. 20. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. 21. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house without the sanctuary. 22. And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. 23. When thou shalt make an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. 24. And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt-offering unto the LORD. 25. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. 26. Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. 27. And when these days are expired, it shall be that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings: and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD.

This is concerning the altar in this mystical temple, and that is mystical too; for Christ is our altar. The Jews after their return out of captivity had an altar long before they had a temple, Ezra. iii. 3. But this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have,

1. The measures of the altar, ver. 13. It was six yards square at the top, and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high; it had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a yard from the ground on which some of the priests stood to minister, and another two yards above that, on which others of them stood, and these were each of them half a yard broad, and had ledges on each side that they might stand firm upon them. The sacrifices were killed at the place spoken of before, chap. xl. 39. What was to be burnt on the altar was given up to those of the lower bench, and handed by them to those on the higher, and they laid it on the altar. Thus in the service of God we must be assistant to one another.

2. The ordinances of the altar. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the dedication of the altar at first; seven days were to be spent in the dedication of it, and every day sacrifices were to be offered upon it, and particularly a goat for a sin-offering, ver. 25. besides a young bullock for a sin offering on the first day, ver. 19. which teacheth us in all our religious services to have an eye to Christ the great sin-offering. Neither our persons nor our performances can be acceptable to God, unless sin be taken away, and that cannot be taken away but by the blood of Christ, which both sanctifies the altar, (for Christ entered by his own blood, Heb. ix. 12.) and the gift upon the altar. There was also to be a bullock and a ram offered for a burnt-offering, ver. 24. which was intended purely for the glory of God, to teach us to have an eye to that in all our services; we present ourselves as living sacrifices, and our devotions as spiritual sacrifices, that we and they may be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

The dedication of the altar is here called the cleansing and purging of it, ver. 20—26. Christ is our altar though he had no pollution to be cleansed from, yet sanctified himself, John xvii. 19. and when we consecrate the altars of our hearts to God to have the fire of holy love always burning upon them, we must see that they be purified and cleansed from the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh. It is observable that there are several instances between the rites and education here and those which were appointed, Exod. xix. to intimate that the ceremonial institutions were mutable things, and the changes in them were earnest of their period in Christ. Only here according to the general law that all the sacrifices must be seasoned with salt, Lev. ii. 14. particular orders are given ver. 24. that the priests shall cast salt upon the sacrifices. Grace is the salt with which all our religious performances must be seasoned, Col. iv. 6. An everlasting covenant

covenant is called a *covenant of salt*, because it is *incorruptible*. The glory reserved for us is *incorruptible* and undefiled; and the grace wrought in us is the hidden man of the heart in that *which is not corruptible*.

2. Concerning the constant use that should be made of it, when it was dedicated: from henceforward the priests shall make their burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon this altar, ver. 27. for therefore it was sanctified that it might sanctify the gift that was offered upon it.

Observe further, (1.) Who were to serve at the altar, the *priests of the seed of Zadok*, ver. 19. That family was substituted in the room of Abiathar by Solomon, and God confirms it. His name signifies *righteous*, for they are the righteous seed that are priests to God, through Christ the Lord our righteousness. (2.) How they should prepare for this service, ver. 26. they shall consecrate themselves; shall fill their hand with the offerings; in token of the giving up of themselves with their offerings to God and to his service. Note, Before we minister to the Lord in holy things we must consecrate ourselves by getting our hands and hearts filled with those things. (3.) How they should speed in it, ver. 27. *I will accept you*. And if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him, it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God shall be accepted of God, their persons first, and then their performances through the Mediator.

C H A P. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, ver. 1—3. (2.) A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, ver. 4—9. (3.) The degrading of those Levites, that had formerly been guilty of idolatry, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok which had kept their integrity, ver. 10—16. (4.) Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests, ver. 17—31.

1. **T**HEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. 2. Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD the God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter in by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for though we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked over again, such a *copiousness* there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to ourselves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the east gate and finds it shut; which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate's being shut as puts honour,

(1.) Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him that the gate of the inner court at which his glory entered, when he took possession of the house, was ever after kept shut, and no man was allowed to enter in by it, ver. 2. The difference ever after made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the other were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of; and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine Majesty, and with very awful thoughts of his transcendent glory; which was designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, *put off thy shoe from off thy foot*. God will have a way by himself.

(2.) Upon the prince of Israel, ver. 2. It is an honour to him, that though he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may; yet, (1.) He shall sit in this gate to eat his share of the peace-offerings, that sacred food, before the Lord. (2.) He shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, by some little door or wicket, either in the gate, or adjoining to it, which is called the way of the porch. This was to signify that God puts some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he hath said, *ye are gods*. Some by the prince here understand the high-priest or the sagan or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is the high-priest of our profession, who entered himself into the holy place, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

4. ¶ Then brought he me the way of the north-gate before the house: and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face. 5. And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof: and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. 6. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations. 7. In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers; uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. 8. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. 9. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purpose with what we had in the beginning of chap. xliii. as the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so he must be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with the glory of the Lord, which strikes an awe upon him, so that he falls prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration, and the expression of an holy awe. *I fell upon my face*, ver. 4. Note, The more we see of the glory of God, the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

1. God chargeth the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him, ver. 5. *Mark well*, set thine heart, apply thy mind to the discoveries now made thee. (1.) *Behold with thine eyes* what is shewed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary; those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting ourselves with divine things we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of things themselves, as at finding the plain appointed way of the converse and communion with those things, that we may go in and out and find pasture. (2.) *Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee*, about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers have need to be very diligent careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are intrusted with, nor mistake concerning them.

2. He sends him upon an errand to the people, to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, ver. 6. It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them: that a people in covenant with God should be rebellious against him. Who are his subjects, if the house of Israel be rebels? But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that though they had been rebellious, yet being the house of Israel, he doth not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which he would not have done if he had been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel, but our Lord Jesus when he ascended on high received gifts for men, *yea, even for the rebellious also*; that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, Psalm lxxviii. 18.

1. He must tell them of their faults; must shew them their rebellious, must shew the house of Jacob their sins. Note, Those that are sent to comfort God's people must first convince them, and so prepare them for comfort; *Let it suffice you of all your abominations*, ver. 6. Note, It is time for those that have continued long in sin to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. *Let the time past of your lives suffice*, for by this time sure you have sinned upon your abominations, and are become sick of them, 1 Pet. iv. 3.

That which is here charged upon them is,

(1.) That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary that were not intitled to them; whereas God had said, *The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, they had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had themselves introduced them, ver. 7. *you brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh*, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary, which was a breaking of the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world. Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime had not been so great; but they were *uncircumcised in heart too*, unhumbled, unreformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice, they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their abominations, wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was giving that which was holy unto dogs, Matt. vii. 6. Note, The admission of those who are openly wicked and profane to special ordinances is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed those in the service of the sanctuary who were not fit for it. Though none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all that were priests and Levites did not immediately attend there, but chosen men of them, who were best qualified, that were most wise and serious and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully: but in making this choice they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work, but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you either had got or hoped to get money by, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you. *Thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things*. Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if to serve some secular selfish purpose they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, will justly have it laid at their door, that they have betrayed the holy things by lodging them in ill hands.

2. He must tell them their duty, ver. 9. *No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary* till he has first submitted to the laws of it. But lest any should think this excluded the penitent believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is *uncircumcised in heart*, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, Col. ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought *Greeks into the temple*, Acts xxi. 29.

10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.

11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering, and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. 14. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15. ¶ But the priests the Levites, the sons of

of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: 16. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The master of the house being to set up house again, takes account of his servants and priests, and sees who are fit to be turned out of their places, and who are to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

1. Those who had been treacherous are degraded and put lower. Those Levites or priests that were carried down the stream of the apostacy of Israel, formerly, that went astray from God after their idols, ver. 10. that had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, that ministered to them before their idols, ver. 12. bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them as Uriah did for Ahaz, and so caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, led them to sin, and hardened them in sin: for if the priests go astray, many will follow their pernicious ways. Perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion. Now these priests who had thus prevaricated, were justly put under the marks of God's displeasure; or if they were dead (as it is likely they were, if the crime was committed before the captivity), the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it. And

(1.) They are sentenced to be deprived in part of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God hath *lift up his hand against them*, hath said it, and sworn it, that *they shall bear their iniquity*, ver. 12. assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; *they shall bear their shame*, ver. 13. for though they have (we charitably hope) repented of it, yet *they shall not come near to do the office of a priest*, i. e. those parts of the office that were peculiar to them; they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, ver. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of his honour, will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might they who have once gone away from him be rejected as unworthy ever to come near to him, and put at an everlasting distance.

(2.) Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence; God deals not in severity as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, ver. 11.—14. They are deprived but in part, *ab officio*, and it would seem not at all *à beneficio*. They shall help to *slay the sacrifice*, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar but at the tables, chap. xl. 39. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another: and even those that have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

2. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, ver. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; but the sons of Zadok, that kept their integrity in a time of general apostacy, that went not astray when others did, *they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table*. Note, God will put marks of honour upon those that give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking trying times, and will employ those in his service who have kept close to his service when others deserted it and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

17. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whilst they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. 19. And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. 21. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments; and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves; but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD. 28. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession. 29. They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be

theirs. 30. And the first of all the first-fruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be *regulars*, not *seculars*, and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning their cloths. They must wear *linen garments*, when they went in to minister, or do any service in the inner court or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was *woollen*, because it would *cause sweat*, ver. 17, 18. They must dress themselves *cool*, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves *clean and sweet*, and avoid every thing that was *sweaty and filthy*, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to: *Sweat came in with sin*, and was a part of the curse, *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*; cloths come in with sin, coats of skins did, and therefore the priests must use as *little and as light* cloathing as possible, and not such as *caused sweat*. When they had finished their service they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, ver. 19. as before, chap. xlii. 14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or, *they shall sanctify the people*, i. e. as it is explained, chap. xlii. 14. they shall approach to those things which are for the people, in their ordinary garments.

2. Concerning their hair, in that they must avoid extremes on both hands, ver. 20. They must not *shave their heads* in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they *suffer their locks to grow long*, as the *beaus*, or that they might be thought *Nazarites*, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must *poll their heads*, and keep their hair short; if a man, especially a minister, wear *long hair*, it is not becoming, 1 Cor. xi. 14. it is effeminate.

3. Concerning their diet, they must be sure to *drink no wine* when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess, should drink and forget the law, ver. 21. *It is not for kings to drink wine*, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Lev. x. 9. Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

4. Concerning their marriages, ver. 22. Here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been *divorced*, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a *widow*, unless she were a *priest's widow*, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priest's families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

5. Concerning their preaching and church government.

(1.) It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both *skilful* and *faithful*, ver. 23. *They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane*, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither *scruple* what is lawful, nor venture upon what is unlawful; that they may not pollute what is holy, nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to *caul people to discern between the clean and the unclean*, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

(2.) It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them, Dent. xvii. 8, 9. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment, ver. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and when they have passed a right judgment shall have the courage to stand to it and stand by it. They must judge, not according to their own fancies or inclinations, or secular interests, but according to my judgments; that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, to the law and to the testimony, Sit liber judex. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute-book, they shall keep my statutes in all mine assemblies. God calls the assemblies of his people his assemblies, because they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them; and in all their acts must keep close to God's laws. Another part of their work, as church-governors is to *hallow God's sabbaths*, to do the public work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify that day, and do nothing to pollute it.

6. Concerning the mourning for dead relations. The rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Lev. xxi. 1—11. A priest shall not come near any dead body (for they must be purified from dead works) except of their next relations, ver. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations when they are removed by death, is not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation, they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a *sin offering*, before they went in again to minister, ver. 26, 27. Note, Though sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be *wiped over again*.

7. Concerning their maintenance. They must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably, ver. 28. *Ye shall give them no possession in Israel*, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life; for God hath said, *I am their inheritance*, and they need no other in reserve; *I am their possession*, and they need no other in hand: Some land was allowed them, chap. xlviii. 10. But their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself, they were the receivers of, to their own proper use and behoof; they lived upon the holy things; and so God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their inheritance and their possession, may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough.

Observe, 1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement. (1.) They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the *sin offering* and *trespass offering*, which would supply them and their families with flesh-meat; and the *meat offering*, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God, will redound to our own advantage. (2.) They must have every *dedicate devoted thing in Israel*, which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This

is explained, *ver. 30. every oblation* or free-will offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable, *of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priests.* We have the law concerning them, *Lev. xxvii. (3.)* They were to have *the first of the dough*, when it was going to the oven, as well as *the first of their fruits*, when they were going to the barn. God that is the first, must have the first; and if it belong to him, his priests must have it. We may then comfortably enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to *begin the week* with laying by for pious uses, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them, if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should *eat that which is torn, or dead of itself*, *ver. 31.* Those that were in want of necessary food might perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Property has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for, that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the *people* might expect from the *priest* for their recompence. They that are kind to a prophet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's reward, *that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house*, *ver. 30.* that God may cause it by commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to *bless the people in the name of the Lord*; not only their congregations, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to *rest in it*; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesteth, he surely blesteth the habitation of those who thus are just, *Prov. iii. 33.* And ministers by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part towards causing the blessings to rest there. Peace be to this house.

C H A P. XLV.

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet in vision, (1.) The division of the holy land. So much for the temple and the priests that attended the service of it, *ver. 1—4.* So much for the Levites, *ver. 5.* So much for the city, *ver. 6.* So much for the prince, and the residue to the people, *ver. 7, 8.* (2.) The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people, *ver. 9—12.* (3.) The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in these oblations, *ver. 13—17.* Particularly in the beginning of the year, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* and in the passover, and the feast of tabernacles, *ver. 21—25.* And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which both for extent and purity should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

1. **M**OREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand. This shall be holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about, and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary, and the most holy place. 4. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD, and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. 5. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6. ¶ And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7. ¶ And a portion shall be for the prince on the one side, and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy portion, and before the possession of the city, from the west-side westward, and from the east-side eastward: and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west-border unto the east-border. 8. In the land shall be his possession in Israel, and my princes shall no more oppress my people, and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and God having warranted them to do it, it would be an act of faith and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it. And it would be welcome news to the captives, to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that whereas they were now but few in number, they should increase and multiply, so as to replenish it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after the return out of captivity; but was to be fulfilled in the model of the christian church, which was perfectly new (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to the *sanctuary*, in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and parlious; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called, *ver. 1. an oblation to the Lord*; for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a *holy portion of the land*, which is to be set out first as the *first-fruits* that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry, is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity and the benefit of posterity, as

any other. This *holy portion of the land* was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time ingross the whole land. So far the *lands of the church* shall extend and no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the *statute of mortmain*. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were twenty-five thousand reeds (so our translation makes it, though some made them only cubits) in length, and ten thousand in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; twenty-five miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so some. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister, were to have their dwellings in this *portion of the land*, that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of the land in Joshua's time the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies, there must they live.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary, the city lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained, *ver. 6. It shall be for the whole house of Israel*; not appropriated as before to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, *Neh. xi. 1, 2.* The portion for the city was full as long, but only half as broad as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by trade, and therefore had the less need of lands.

3. The next allotment after the church lands, and the city lands, is of the *crown-lands*, *ver. 7, 8.* Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are said to lie on the one side, and on the other side of the church lands; and city lands, to intimate that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share, both together; others make it to be a thirteenth part of the rest of the land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs, must have wherewithal to support his dignity, and have abundance that he may not be in temptation to oppress the people; which yet with many doth not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, *my princes shall no more oppress my people*; for God will make the officers peace, and the exactors righteousness. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land, the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the former governors, and yet kept a handsome court, *Neh. v. 15—18.* But so much is said of the prince in this mystical holy state, to intimate that in the gospel church magistrates should be as nursing fathers to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the holy religion they profess, as far as they are subject to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people, according to their tribes, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the testimony of Israel to near them, and the throne of judgment.

9. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel; remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, and take away your exactions from my people, saith the LORD. 10. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and commutative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted by the authority of the church's King and God,

1. That *princes do not oppress their subjects*, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them, *ver. 9. Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel*, that you have been oppressive to the people, and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock instead of feeding them, and from henceforward do so no more. Note, Even princes and great men that have long done amiss, must at length think it time, high time to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying they had been long accustomed to oppress and therefore may persist in it, for the custom will bear them out, they should say they have been long accustomed to it, and therefore, as here, *Let the time past suffice*, and let them now remove violence and spoil; let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful usages, and turn out those from employments under them that do violence. Let them take away their exactions, ease their subjects of those taxes, which they find lie heavy upon them, and let them execute judgment and justice according to law, as the duty of their place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people, God saith, they are my people, and they in a special manner rule for God.

2. That one neighbour doth not cheat another in commerce, *ver. 10. ye shall have just balances*, in which to weigh both money and goods; a *just ephah* for dry measure of corn and flour, a *just bath* for measure of liquids, wine and oil; and the *ephah and bath* shall be one measure, the tenth part of a *chomer* or *cor*, *ver. 11.* So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons, and four pints, and something more. As omer was but the tenth part of an ephah, *Exod. xvi. 36.* and the hundredth part of a *chomer* or *homer*, and contained about six pints. The *shekel* is here settled, *ver. 12.* it is twenty gerahs, just half a Roman ounce, in our money two shillings fourpence farthing, and almost the eighth part of a farthing, as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels, the maneh, or pound, was reckoned; which when it was set for a meere weight (saith bishop Cumberland) without respect to coinage, contained just one hundred shekels, as appears by comparing *1 Kings x. 17.* where it is said three manehs, or pounds of gold, went to one shield, with the parallel place, *2 Chron. ix. 16.* where it is said, three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield. But when the maneh is set for a sum of money or coin, it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here; where twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the maneh. But it is thus reckoned, because they had one piece of money that weighed twenty shekels, another twenty-five, another fifteen, all which made up one pound; as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God, and the reputation of it before men.

13. This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley: 14. Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is an homer of ten baths; for ten baths are an homer: 15. And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. 16. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin-offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the first month, in the first day of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21. In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering. 23. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering. 24. And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah. 25. In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness towards men, which is really a branch of true religion, he comes next to give some directions for their religion towards God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. It is required that they offer an oblation to the Lord, out of what they have, *ver. 13.* All the people of the land must give an oblation, *ver. 16.* As God's tenants they must pay a quit-rent to their great landlord: they had offered an oblation out of their real estates, *ver. 1.* a holy portion of their land; now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgment of their receivings from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is we must honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited by any thing that we can give him, *Psal. l. 9.* No, it is but an oblation, we only offer it to him, the benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor, who as our neighbours are ourselves, or his ministers who serve continually for our good.

2. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this oblation. And the quantum of this is thus settled. (1.) Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every homer of wheat and barley, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, *ver. 13.* (2.) Out of their oil, (and probably their wine too) they were to offer a hundredth part, for this oblation; out of every cor or homer, which contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, *ver. 14.* This was given to the altar; for in every meat-offering there was flour mingled with oil. (3.) Out of their flocks they were to give one lamb out of two hundred; that was the smallest proportion of all, *ver. 15.* But it must be out of the fat pastures of Israel. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for burnt-offerings and peace offerings; the former were offered for the giving of glory to God, the latter for the fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God; and in our spiritual sacrifices these are our two great errands at the throne of grace; but in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to make reconciliation for them; Christ is our sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we have an eye in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

3. This oblation must be given for the prince in Israel, *ver. 16.* some read it to the prince and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hand we must put them to be presented to the Father. Or, they shall give it with the prince; every private person shall bring his oblation to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, *ver. 17.* it shall be the prince's part to provide all the offerings; to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite thereto; the magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

4. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether new, and not instituted by the law of Moses; it is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary. (1.) On the first day of the ninth month, upon new-

year's day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of the sanctuary, *ver. 18.* i. e. to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year; and to implore grace for the preventing of that iniquity; and for the better performance of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And in token of this, the blood of this sin-offering was to be put upon the posts of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but the settle of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court, *ver. 19.* to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing; frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those that worship God together should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future; and it is very reasonable to begin the year with this work; as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, *2 Chron. xxix. 17.* They were here appointed to cleanse the sanctuary upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the passover, an ordinance which of all other the Old Testament institutions had most in it of Christ and gospel grace, and therefore it was very fit they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before by cleansing the sanctuary. (2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated on the seventh day of the first month, *ver. 20.* And then it was intended to make atonement for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple. Note, He that sins, errs, and is simple; he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shews himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mistake, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Such sins sacrifices were appointed to atone for, which men were surprised into, did before they were aware; which they would not have done, if they had known and remembered aright, which they were overtaken in, and for which afterwards they condemn themselves. But for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, *Numb. xv. 30.* By these repeated sacrifices ye shall reconcile the house, i. e. God will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will let it alone this year also.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, *ver. 21.* Christ is our passover that is sacrificed for us; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our passover feast; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of unleavened bread. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a sin-offering to be offered for himself and the people; a bullock on the first day, *ver. 21.* and a kid of the goats every other day, *ver. 23.* to teach us in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great sin-offering, by which transgression was finished and an everlasting righteousness brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a burnt-offering, purely for the honour of God, and no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat-offering, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet no waste, *ver. 23, 24.*

3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next, *ver. 25.* and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore often repeated, not only every year but every feast, every day of the feast, because they could not make the comers thereunto perfect, *Heb. x. 1-3.* See the necessity of our frequent repenting the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered once for all, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart must be every day offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and stick to it.

C H A P. XLVI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship, *ver. 1-15.* (2.) A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, *ver. 16-18.* (3.) A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices, and the baking of the meat-offerings, *ver. 19-24.*

1. THUS saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priest shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offering, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons. 4. And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath-day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5. And the meat offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 6. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7. And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 8. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9. ¶ But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feast, he

he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in: and when they go forth, shall go forth. 11. And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meat offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 12. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the LORD one shall then open him the gate that looked toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth, and after his going forth one shall shut the gate. 13. Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the LORD of a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14. And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD. 15. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, every morning for a continual burnt offering.

Whether the rules for public worship here laid down were designed to be observed, even in those things wherein they differed from the law of Moses, and were so observed under the second temple, is not certain; we find not in the history of that latter part of the Jewish church, that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, as one would think they should have done, but only by the law of Moses, looking upon this then in the next age after as *mythical*, and not *literal*.

We may observe in these verses,

1. That the place of worship was fixed, and rules given concerning that, both to prince and people.

(1.) The east-gate which was kept shut at other times was to be opened on the sabbath-days, in the new moons, *ver. 1.* and whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, *ver. 12.* Of the keeping of this gate ordinarily shut we read before, *chap. xlv.* 2. whereas the other gates of the court were opened every day, this only on *high days*, and on special occasions, when it was opened for the prince, who was to go in by the way of the porch of that gate, *ver. 2.* and again, *ver. 8.* Some think he went in with the priests and Levites into the inner court, (for into that court this gate was the entrance) and they observe that magistrates and ministers should join forces, and go the same way, hand in hand, in promoting the service of God. But it should rather seem that he did not go through the gate (as the glory of the Lord had done) though it was open, but he went by the way of the porch of the gate, stood at the post of the gate, and worshipped at the threshold of the gate, *ver. 2.* where he had a full view of the priests' performances at the altar, and signified his concurrence in them, for himself, and for the people of the land, that stood behind him at the door of that gate, *ver. 3.* Thus must every prince shew himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be a door-keeper in the house of his God, and as the word there is, *lie at the threshold*, *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* Note, The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God. Even princes themselves, when they draw near to God, must worship with reverence and godly fear; owning that even they are unworthy to approach him. But Christ is our prince whom God causeth to draw near, and approach to him, *Jer. xxx. 21.*

2. As to the north-gate and south-gate, by which they entered into the court of the people (not into the inner court) there was this rule given, that whoever came in at the north-gate should go out at the south-gate, and whoever came in at the south-gate should go out at the north-gate, *ver. 9.* Some think this was to prevent thrusting and jostling one another, for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. We may suppose they came in at the gate that was next their own houses, but when they went away, God would have them go out at the gate which would lead them the furthest way about, that they might have time for meditation; being thereby obliged to go a great way round the sanctuary, they might have an opportunity to consider the palaces of it, and if they improved their time well in fetching this circuit, they would call it the next way home. Some observe that this may mind us in the service of God to be still pressing forward, *Phil. iii. 13.* and not to look back: and in our attendance upon ordinances not to go back as we came, but more holy, and heavenly, and spiritual.

(3.) It is appointed that the people shall worship at the door of the east-gate, where the prince doth, he at the head, and they attending him, both in the sabbaths, and in the new moons, *ver. 3.* and that when they come in and go out, the prince shall be in the midst of them, *ver. 10.* Note, Great men should by their constant and reverent attendance on God in public worship give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very graceful becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion; and those who thus honour God with their honour, he will delight to honour.

2. That the ordinances of worship were fixed. Though the prince is supposed himself to be a very hearty zealous friend to the sanctuary, yet it is not left to him, no not in concert with the priests, to appoint what sacrifices shall be offered, but God himself appoints them; for it is his prerogative to institute the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

1. Every morning as duly as the morning came, they must offer a lamb for a burnt-offering, *ver. 13.* It is strange that no mention is made of the evening sacrifices; but Christ being come, and having offered himself now in the end of the world, *Heb. ix. 26.* we are to look upon him as the evening sacrifice, about the time of the offering up of which he died.

2. On the sabbath-days, whereas by the law of Moses four lambs were to be offered, *Exod. xxviii. 9.* it is here appointed that (at the prince's charge) there shall be six lambs offered, and a ram beside, *ver. 4.* To intimate how much we should abound in sabbath work, now in gospel-time, and what plenty of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise we should offer up to God on that day; and if with such sacrifices God is well pleased, sure we have a great deal of reason to be so.

3. On the new moons, in the beginning of their months, there was over and above the usual sabbath-sacrifices, the additional offering of a young bullock, *ver. 6.* Those who do much for God and their souls steadily and constantly, must yet upon some occasions do yet more.

4. All the sacrifices were to be without blemish: so Christ the great sacrifice was, *1 Pet. i. 19.* and so Christians who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, should aim and endeavour to be; blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.

5. All the sacrifices were to have their meat-offering annexed to them; for so the law of Moses had appointed, to shew what a good table God keeps in his house; and that we ought to honour him with the fruit of our ground, as well as with the fruit of our cattle, because in both he hath blessed us, *Deut. xxviii. 4.* In the beginning Cain offered the one, and Abel the other. Some observe that the meat-offerings here, are much larger in proportion than they were by the law of Moses. Then it was three-tenths-deals to a bullock, and two to a ram, (i. e. so many tenths parts of an ephah) and half a hin of oil at the most, *Numb. xv. 6-9.* But here for every bullock and every ram, a whole ephah, and a whole hin of oil, *ver. 7.* These unbloody sacrifices shall be more abounded in; or in general it intimates, that as now under the gospel God abounds in the gifts of his grace to us, more than under the law, so we should abound in the returns of praise and duty to him. But it is observable that in the meat-offering for the lambs, the prince is allowed to offer as he shall be able to give, *ver. 5* and *ver. 7.* as his hand shall attain unto, and again, *ver. 11.* Note, Princes themselves must spend as they can afford; and even in that which is laid out in works of piety, God expects and requires but that we should do according to our ability; every man as God has prospered him, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* God hath not made us to serve with an offering, *Isa. xliii. 23.* but considers our time and state. Yet this will not countenance those who pretend a disability that is not real; or those who by their extravagances in other things disable themselves to do the good they should. And we find those praised, who in an extraordinary case of charity went not only to their power, but beyond their power.

16. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance.

17. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his son's for them. 18. Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands.

1. If he has a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he pleaseth, as a token of his favour and in recompense for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever, *ver. 16.* provided it do not go out of the family: there may be a cause for parents when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than to another, as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, *Gen. xlviii. 22.*

2. Yet if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, *ver. 17.* But if he see cause, he may give him lands to the year of the Jubilee, and then they must return to the family again, *ver. 17.* The servant might have the rents, issues and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the *Jus proprietarium*, shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that *Joh. viii. 35.* The servant abideth not in the house for ever, as his son doth.

3. What estates he gives his children must be of his own, *ver. 18.* He shall not take of the people's inheritance, under pretence of having many children to provide for; he shall not find ways to make them forfeit their estates, or to force them to sell them, and so thrust his subjects out of their possession, but let him and his sons be content with their own; it is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown, by encroaching upon the rites and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will be but a poor prince, when the people are scattered every man from his possession, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, he it never so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is in the best manner at their service. It is better for themselves to gain their affections by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

19. ¶ After he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there was a place in the two sides westward. 20. Then said he unto me, This is the place where the priest shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meat offering; that they bear them not out into the utter court, to sanctify the people. 21. Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court there was a court. 22. In the four corners of the court there were courts joined of forty cubits long, and thirty broad, these four corners were of one measure. 23. And there was a row of building round about in them, round about them four, and it was made with boiling places under the rows round about. 24. Then said he unto me, These are the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offerings, *ver. 20.* He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar, had need have large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court, *ver.* 19. and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, *ver.* 21, 22, 23. These were the places where it is likely there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost: Pity holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to *boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering*, those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to *bake the meat-offering*, their share of it which they had from the altar for their own tables, *ver.* 20. Care was taken that they *bear them not out into the outer court to sanctify the people*. Let them not pretend to *sanctify the people* with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine, that by touching these sacred things they were *sanctified*, and made ever the better or more acceptable to God. It should seem by *Flag.* ii. 12. there were those that had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitious vanities.

C H A P. XLVII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtue; the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them, ver.* 1—12. (2.) *An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourned among them, ver.* 13—23.

1. **A**FTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. 2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. 4. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. 5. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11. But the miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. 12. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning, that from thence we conclude the other parts of his vision hath so too; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, and the keeping of the temple clean and the carrying off those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, *Zech.* xiv. 8. may explain it, *of living waters that shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea*. And there is plainly a reference to this in St. John's vision of a pure river of water of life, *Rev.* xxii. 1. That seems to represent the glory and joy, which is *grace perfected*. This here seems to represent the grace and joy, which is *glory begun*. Most interpreters agree that these waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which it spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe,

1. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but has the fountain-head first discovered to him, *ver.* 1. *Waters*

issued out from the threshold of the house eastward. And from under the right-side of the house, i. e. the south-side of the altar. And again, *ver.* 2. *there ran out waters on the right-side*; signifying, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, *Isa.* ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endued them with the gift of tongues, that they might carry these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand and *preach the words of this life*, *Acts* v. 20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must begin at Jerusalem, *Luke* xxiv. 47. But that is not all, Christ is the temple, he is the door, from him those living waters flow, out of his pierced side: It is the water that he gives us, that is the well of water which springs up, *John* iv. 14. And it is by believing in him that we receive from him rivers of living water; and this spake he of the Spirit, *John* vii. 38, 39. The original of these waters was not above-ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold: for the fountain of a believer's life is a mystery; it is hid with Christ in God, *Col.* iii. 3. Some observe that they came forth on the right-side of the house, to intimate that gospel-blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, *Psalms* exix. 130. David speaks it to the praise of Zion, *all my springs are in thee*, *Psalms* lxxxvii. 7. They came from the side of the altar, for it is in and by Jesus Christ the great altar (who sanctifies our gifts to God) that God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places. From God as the fountain, in him as the channel, flows the river, which makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High, *Psalms* xlvii. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise from under the threshold; there they proceed from the throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb, *Rev.* xxii. 1.

2. The progress and increase of these waters. They went forth eastward, *ver.* 3. toward the east country, *ver.* 9. for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about a thousand cubits, they went over cross it to try the depth of it, and it was to the ankles, *ver.* 3. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then to try the depth of it they waded through it the second time, and it was up to their knees, *ver.* 4. They walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle, the waters were to the loins; they then walked a thousand cubits further, and attempted to repass it the fourth time but found it impracticable, the waters were risen, either by the addition of brooks that fell into it above ground or by springs under ground, so that they were waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, *ver.* 5. Note, 1. The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters as those of a pond. The gospel when it was first preached was still spreading further; grace in the soul is still pressing forwards; it is an active principle, *plus ultra*, onwards still, till it comes to perfection. 2. They are increasing waters. The river as it runs constantly, so the further it goes the fuller it grows. The gospel church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook, but by degrees it came to be to the ankles, to the knees, many were added to it daily, and the grain of mustard-seed grew up to be a great tree. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning which shines more and more to the perfect day. 3. It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world; observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit and walk after them, under a divine conduct, as Ezekiel here did. 4. It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only look on the surface of those waters, but go to the bottom of them as far as we can; be often digging, often diving into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as those who covet to be intimately acquainted with those things. 5. If we search into the things of God, we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees or the loins; and some quite beyond the reach, which we cannot penetrate into or account for, but despairing to find the bottom, must as St. Paul, sit down at the brink and adore the depth, *Rom.* xi. 33. It has been often said, that in the Scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so ebb that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to begin with that which is most easy, and get our hearts washed with those things before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood; it is good to take our work before us.

3. The extent of this river. It issues towards the east country, but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or stretcheth a compass so as that it goes down into the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the dead sea, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias which lay north-east, or the great sea which lay west, *ver.* 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, *Acts* viii. 1. and afterwards the nations about, nay, and those that lay most remote, even in the isles of the sea, were enlightened and leavened by it. The sound of it went forth to the end of the world; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river.

4. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary where-ever they come and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Being brought forth into the sea, the sulphureous lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those waters shall be healed, *ver.* 9. shall become sweet and pleasant and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make where-so-ever it came in its power; as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love; and those that were dead in trespasses and sins were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisia cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho with which he healed them, *2 Kings* ii. 20, 21. Christ coming into the world to be its physician, sent his gospel as the great medicine, the Panpharmacum, so there is in it a remedy for every malady. Nay, where-ever these rivers come they make things to live, *ver.* 9. both plants and animals. To the water of life, *Rev.* xxii. 1—17. Christ came that we may have life, and for that end he sends his gospel, every thing shall live whither the river comes. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive, and living saints lively: every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, *ver.* 11. the marishes and miry places thereof, that are settled in the mire of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, they shall not be healed; the same gospel which to others is a favour of life

unto life, shall to them be a favour of death unto death, *they shall be given to salt*, i. e. to perpetual barrenness, *Deut. xxix. 23.* They that will not be watered with the grace of God and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts lusts and left for ever unfruitful. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee more for ever.* They shall be given to salt, i. e. to monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife that was turned into a pillar of salt to season others.

5. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river; every living moving thing should be found here, *shall live here*, ver. 9. i. e. shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly; so that there shall be a very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea exceeding many. There shall be as great plenty of the river fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there uses to be of salt-water fish, ver. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes in the rising generations, and the dew of their youth. In the creation the waters brought forth the fish abundantly, Gen. i. 20, 21. and they still live in and by the waters that produced them; so believers are begotten by the word of truth, James i. 18. and born by it, 1 Pet. i. 23. that river of God, by it they live, from it they have their maintenance and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish upon dry ground; so David was when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will the fishers flock, and there they will cast their nets; and therefore to intimate the replenishing of these waters, and there being made every way useful, it is here foretold, that the fishers shall stand upon the banks of this river from En-gedi which lies on the border of the dead sea, to En-eghaim, another city that joins to that sea, and all along shall spread their nets. The dead sea which before was stunk as noisome and noxious shall be frequented: gospel graces make those persons and places which were unprofitable and good for nothing to become serviceable to God and man.

6. The trees that were on the banks of this river, many trees on the one side, and on the other, ver. 9. which made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye, the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery: But this is not all, ver. 12. they are trees for meat, and the fruit of them shall not be consumed, for it shall produce fresh fruit every month. The leaf shall be for medicine, and it shall not fade. This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly, *Rev. xxii. 2.* where on either side of the river is said to grow the tree of life, which yielded his fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. Christians are supposed to be these trees; ministers especially; trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3. set by the rivers of water, the waters of the sanctuary, Psalm i. 3. grafted into Christ the tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, rooted in him, Col. ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued by that one Spirit who worketh all in all. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, and through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are fruit-trees, denoted as the fig-tree and the olive, with their fruits to honour God and men, Judges ix. 9. The fruit thereof shall be for meat, for the lips of the righteous feed many. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine, for bruises and sores, marg. Good Christians with their good discourses, which are as their fruits, do good to those about them, they strengthen the weak and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerful words doth good like a medicine, not only to themselves but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their leaf shall not fade, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life in their root, but sap in all their branches; their profession shall not wither, Phil. i. 3. neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed, i. e. they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, Psalm xcii. 14. Or, the reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, fruit to life eternal; that is indeed fruit which shall not be consumed. They bring new fruit according to their months, some in one month and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which notes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing, they shall never be weary of well doing; and a very happy climate, such as that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they are watered every moment, Isa. xxvii. 3. for whoever planted them, it was that which gave the increase.

13. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. 14. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. 15. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north-side from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; 16. Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. 17. And the border from the sea, shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side. 18. And the east-side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east-sea. And this is the east-side. 19. And the south-side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south-side southward. 20. The west-side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west-side. 21. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. 22. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you

and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

1. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance, ver. 13. I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers, i. e. promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God has not forgot his oath which he swore to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. I lifted up mine hand to give it, and therefore it shall without fail fall to you for an inheritance. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God that cannot lie hath promised.

2. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan, when Joshua was to put the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, ver. 20. Note, It is God that appointeth the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say, that the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places. The lake of Sodom is here called the east sea, for it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a salt sea, as it was in Numbers.

3. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that, ver. 13, 21. ye shall inherit it, one as well as another, ver. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another: as the tribes returned out of Babylon this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand in type and vision for the gospel church; the Israel of God, it was very equal, because we find in another vision an equal number of each of the twelve tribes sealed for the living God just twelve thousand of each, Rev. vii. 5, &c. And to those sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates likewise that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have obtained like precious faith. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ, and made partakers of him.

4. The strangers that sojourn among them, which shall beget children, and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes, as if they had been native Israelites, ver. 22, 23. which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would teach the Jews, who was their neighbour; not those only of their own nation and religion, but those whoever they were that they had an opportunity of shewing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel times, when the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom there is no difference, Rom. x. 12. This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, Heb. xi. 16. in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, Isa. lvi. 3.

C H A P. XLVIII.

In this chapter we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. (1.) The portion of the twelve tribes, given to the north of the sanctuary, ver. 1-7. and five to the south, ver. 23-29. (2.) The allotment of the land for the sanctuary, and the priests, ver. 8-11. for the Levites, ver. 12, 13, 14. for the city, ver. 15-20. and for the prince, ver. 21, 22. Much of this we had before, chap. xlv. (3.) A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, ver. 30-35. which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

1. NOW these are the names of the tribes, from the north-end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath (for these are his sides east and west) a portion for Dan. 2. And by the border of Dan, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Asher. 3. And by the border of Asher, from the east-side even unto the west-side, a portion for Naphtali. 4. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Manasseh. 5. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Ephraim. 6. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east-side even unto the west-side, a portion for Reuben. 7. And by the border of Reuben, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Judah. 8. ¶ And by the border of Judah, from the east-side unto the west-side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east-side unto the west-side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD shall be of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10. And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand

thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof. 11. *It shall be for the priests that are sanctified, of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.* 12 And this oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites. 13. And over against the border of the priests the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the LORD. 15. ¶ And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16. And these shall be the measures thereof; the north-side four thousand and five hundred, and the south-side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east-side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18. And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy portion shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20. All the oblations shall be five and twenty thousand, by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city. 21. ¶ And the residue shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east-border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west-border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. 22. Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east-side unto the west-side Benjamin shall have a portion. 24. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east-side unto the west-side, Simeon shall have a portion. 25. And by the border of Simeon, from the east-side unto the west-side, Issachar a portion. 26. And by the border of Issachar, from the east-side unto the west-side, Zebulun, a portion. 27. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east-side unto the west-side, Gad a portion. 28. And by the border of Gad, at the south-side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea. 29. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord GOD.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious and so far about as the way that was taken in Joshua's time; for in the distribution of spiritual and heavenly blessings, there is not that danger of murmuring and quarreling as in the participation of temporal blessings; when God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it were soon put to silence, with, *may I not do what I will with my own?* and such is the equal distribution here among the tribes.

In this distribution of the land we may observe,

1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua's time, nor agrees with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses; Simeon here is not divided in Jacob, nor is Zebulun a *haven of ships*; a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood literally as *spiritually*; though the mystery of it is very much hidden from us. In gospel times old things are passed away, *behold, all things are become new.* The Israel of God is cast into a new method.

2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, *Josh. xix. 40.* is first provided for here, *ver. 1.* Thus in the gospel, the last shall be first, *Matt. xix. 30.* God in the dispensations of his grace doth not follow the same method that he doth in the disposals of his providence. But Dan had now his portion thereabouts where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and furthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revolted to idolatry.

3. That all the ten tribes, that were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes that were long after carried to Babylon,

have their allotment in this visionary land; which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is probable there were returns of many more afterwards at several times which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grotius saith, if the ten tribes had repented and returned to God, as the *chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites*, Ezra i. 5. they should have fared as those two tribes did, but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for each.

4. That every tribe in this visionary distribution had its particular lot assigned it by a divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common, *Acts ii. 44.* many precepts of the gospel suppose that every man should know his own. And we must not only acknowledge but acquiesce in the hand of God appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us. *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* Psalm xlvii. 4.

5. That the tribes lay contiguous; by the border of one tribe was the portion of another, all on a row, in exact order, so that like stones in an arch they fixed and strengthened and wedged in one another. *Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together!* It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel government; thus, though they are many, yet they are one, and should hold together in holy love and mutual assistance.

6. That Reuben, which before lay at a distance beyond Jordan, now lies next to Judah, and next but one to the sanctuary; for the scandal he lay under, for which he was told he *should not excel*, began by this time to wear off. What has turned to the reproach of any person or people, ought not to be remembered for ever, but should at length be kindly forgotten.

7. That the sanctuary was in the midst of them; there were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, and princes and the cities portion, with that of five tribes more to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be in the heart of the kingdom, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other, would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation though dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet by meeting steadily to worship God together should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was the priests were; for them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be, *ver. 10.* As on the one hand this speaks honour and comfort to ministers, that what is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a holy oblation to the Lord; so it speaks their duty, which is, that since they are appointed and maintained by the service of the sanctuary, they ought to attend continually to this very thing; to reside on their cures; those that live upon the altar must serve at the altar, not take the wages to themselves, and devolve the work upon others: but how can they serve the altar, his altar they live upon, if they do not live near it?

9. Those priests had the priests' share of these lands that had approved themselves faithful to God in times of trial, *ver. 11.* It shall be for the sons of Zadok, who it seems had signalized themselves in some critical juncture and went not astray when the children of Israel, and other the Levites went astray. God will put honour upon them, and hath special favours in reserve for them who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy. They are swimming upward, and so they will find at last, that are swimming against the stream.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the first fruits of the land, and was therefore holy to the Lord; and though the priests and Levites had both the use of it, and the inheritance of it to them and their heirs, yet they might not sell it or exchange it, *ver. 14.* It is sacrilege to convert that to other uses which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called a *profane place*, *ver. 15.* or *common*; not but that the city was a holy city above other cities, for the Lord was there, but in comparison with the sanctuary, it was a profane place. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even those that like this have the sanctuary near them, are *profane places*, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, *From Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land*, *Jer. xxiii. 15.*

12. The city is made to be exactly four square, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites cities did in the first division of the land, *ver. 16, 17.* which never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates that it is to be understood spiritually of the beauty and stability of the gospel church, that city of the living God, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immovable by his promise.

13. Whereas before the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin in whose tribe it lay, now the head city lies not in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but they that serve the city, that bear office in it, shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel, *ver. 19.* The most eminent men must be picked out of all the tribes of Israel, for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was a great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that live in the city are said to serve the city, for wherever we are we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not come out of the tribes of Israel to the city to take their ease, and enjoy their pleasures, but to serve the city, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing they would have a good influence upon the country too.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to public business in the city, as well as in the sanctuary, should have an honourable comfortable maintenance; lands are appointed, the increase whereof shall be food unto them that serve the city, *ver. 18.* Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates that attend the service of the state, as well as ministers that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing; and for this cause pay we tribute also.

15. The prince had a lot for himself suited to the dignity of his high station, *ver. 21.* we took an account of it before, *chap. xlv.* He was seated near the sanctuary, where the testimony of Israel was, and near the city where the thrones of judgment were, that he might be a protection to both; and might see that the duty of both was carefully and faithfully done; and herein he was a minister of God for good to the whole community. Christ is the church's prince that defends it on every side, and creates a defence;

defence; nay, he is himself a defence upon all its glory, and compasseth it with his favour.

Lastly, As Judah had his lot next the sanctuary on one side, so Benjamin had of all the tribes his lot nearest it on the other side; which honour was reserved for them who adhered to the house of David and the temple at Jerusalem, when the other ten tribes went astray from both. It is enough if treachery and apostasy upon repentance be pardoned, but constancy and fidelity shall be rewarded and preferred.

30. ¶ And these are the goings out of the city on the north-side, four thousand and five hundred measures; 31. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32. And at the east-side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33. And at the south-side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34. At the west-side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35. It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.

We have here a farther account of the city that should be built for the metropolis of this glorious land, and to be the receptacle of those who should come from all parts to worship in the sanctuary adjoining. It is no where called Jerusalem, nor is the land which we have had such a particular account of the dividing of, any where called, the land of Canaan; for the old names are forgotten, to intimate that the old things are done away, behold, all things are become new.

Now concerning this city observe here,

1. The measures of its out-lets, and the grounds belonging to it, for its several conveniences; each way its appurtenances extended four thousand and five hundred measures, eighteen thousand in all, ver. 35. But what these measures were is uncertain; it is never said in all this chapter, whether so many reeds, as our translation determines, by inserting that word, ver. 8. each reed containing six cubits and a span, chap. xl. 5. and why should the measurer appear with the measuring reed in his hand of that length, if he did not measure with that, except where it is expressly said, he measured by cubits? Or whether, as others think, it is so many cubits, because those are mentioned, chap. xlv. 2. and chap. xlvii. 3. yet that makes me incline rather to think that where cubits are not mentioned, it must be intended so many lengths of the measuring reed. But those who understand it of so many cubits, are not agreed whether it be meant of the common cubit, which was half a yard, or the geometrical cubit, which for better expedition is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands, which some say contained six cubits, others about three cubits and a half, so making a thousand cubits the same with one thousand paces, that is an English mile. But our being left at this uncertainty, is an intimation that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant is, that there is an exact and just proportion observed by infinite wisdom in modelling the

gospel church, which though now we cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

2. The number of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side; which was very agreeable when it lay four square; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served out of all the tribes of Israel, ver. 19. it was fit that each tribe should have its gate; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, ver. 32. On the north side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, ver. 31. On the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, ver. 32. On the south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, ver. 33. And on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, ver. 34. Conformable to this in St. John's vision, the New Jerusalem, (for so the holy city is called there, though not here) has twelve gates, three of a side, and on them are written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, Rev. xxi. 12, 13. Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith for all that come of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers. Whoever will may come and take of the water of life, of the tree of life freely.

3. The name given to this city; from that day, when it shall be new erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, Jerusalem the vision of peace, but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there, ver. 35. This intimated,

1. That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances and in his providences; they should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? For they shall see and say, that he is with them of a truth: And then though their troubles were many and threatening, they were like the bush which burned, but was not consumed, because the Lord was there. But when God departed from their temple, when he said *Migramus hinc*, their house was soon left unto them desolate. Being no longer his, it was not much longer theirs.

2. That the gospel church should likewise have the presence of God in it, though not in the *Shechinah*, as of old, yet in a token of it no less sure, that of his Spirit. Where the gospel is faithfully preached, gospel ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, The Lord is there; for faithful is he that hath said it, and will be as good as his word: Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. The Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whither else shall we go to mend ourselves? Nay, it is true of every good Christian, he dwells in God, and God in him; whatever soul has in it a living principle of grace, it may be truly said, The Lord is there.

3. That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that the Lord is there. St. John's representation of that blessed state doth indeed far exceed this in many respects. That is all gold and pearls, and precious stones; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it needs not the light of the sun. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be, that God himself shall be with them, Rev. xxi. 3. that he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them, Rev. vii. 15. And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that the Lord is there. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be for ever with the Lord.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

AN E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

DANIEL.

THE book of Ezekiel left the affairs of Jerusalem under a doleful aspect, all in ruins, but with a joyful prospect of all in glory again.

This of Daniel fitly follows: Ezekiel told us what was seen and what was foreseen by him in the former years of the captivity: Daniel tells us what was seen and foreseen in the latter years of the captivity, when God employs different hands, yet it is about the same work: And it was a comfort to the poor captives, that they had first one prophet among them and then another, to shew them how long, and a sign that God had not quite cast them off. Let us enquire,

1. Concerning this prophet; his Hebrew name was Daniel, which signifies the judgment of God; his Chaldean name was Belteshazzar. He was of the tribe of Judah, and as it should seem of the royal family: he was betimes eminent for wisdom and piety: Ezekiel, his contemporary, but much his senior, speaks of him as an oracle when thus he upbraids the king of Tyre with his conceitedness of himself; Thou art wiser than Daniel, Ezek. xxvii. 3. He is likewise there celebrated for success in prayer, when Noah, Daniel, and Job, are reckoned as three men that had the greatest interest in heaven of any other, Ezek. xiv. 14. He began betimes to be famous, and continued long so. Some of the Jewish Rabbins are loth to acknowledge him to be a prophet of the higher form, and therefore rank his book among the *Hagiographa*, not among the prophecies, and would not have their disciples pay much regard to it: One reason they pretend is, because he did not live such a mean mortified life as Jeremiah and some other of the prophets did, but lived like

like a prince, and was a prime minister of state; whereas we find him persecuted as other prophets were, *chap. vi.* and mortifying himself as other prophets did, when he *eat no pleasant bread*, *chap. x. 3.* and fainting and sick when he was under the power of the Spirit of prophecy, *chap. viii. 27.* Another reason they pretend is, because he wrote his book in a heathen country, and *there* had his visions, and not in the land of Israel: but by the same reason, Ezekiel also must be expunged out of the roll of prophets. But the true reason is, he speaks so plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming, that the Jews cannot avoid the conviction of it, and therefore do not care to hear of it. But Josephus calls him one of the *greatest of the prophets*, nay, the angel Gabriel calls him a *man greatly beloved*. He lived long an active life in the courts and councils of some of the greatest monarchs the world ever had, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius; for we mistake if we confine the privilege of an intercourse with heaven to *speculative men*, or those that spend their time in contemplation; no, who was more intimately acquainted with the mind of God than Daniel, a courtier, a statesman, and a man of business? The Spirit, as the wind, blows where it lists. And if those that have much to do in the world plead that as an excuse for the seldomness and slowness of their converse with God, Daniel will condemn them. Some have thought he returned to Jerusalem, and was one of the *masters of the Greek synagogue*; but nothing of that appears in scripture, it is therefore generally concluded he died in Persia at Susan, where he lived to be very old.

2. Concerning this book; The first six chapters of it are historical, and are plain and easy; the six last are prophetic, and in them are many things dark and hard to be understood; which yet would be more intelligible if we had a more complete history of the nations, and especially the Jewish nation, from Daniel's time to the coming of the Messiah. Our Saviour intimates the difficulty of apprehending the sense of Daniel's prophecies, when speaking of them, he saith, *Let him that readeth understand*, Matt. xxiv. 15. The first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter, are in Hebrew, thence to the eighth chapter is in the Chaldee dialect; from thence to the end is in Hebrew. Mr. Broughton observes, That as the Chaldeans were kind to Daniel, and gave cups of cold water to him when he requested it rather than the king's wine, God would not have them *lose their reward*, but made that language which they taught him, to have honour in his writings through all the world, unto this day. Daniel, according to his computation, continueth the holy story from the first surprising of Jerusalem by the Chaldean Babel, when he himself was carried away captive, until the last destruction of it by Rome, the mystical Babel, for so far forward his predictions looks, *chap. ix. 27.* The fables of Susanna, and of Bell and the Dragon, in both which Daniel is made a party, are apocryphal stories, which we think we have no reason to give any credit to, they being never found in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but only in the Greek, nor ever admitted by the Jewish church. There are some, both of the histories and of the prophecies of this book, that bear date in the latter end of the Chaldean monarchy, and others of both, that are dated in the beginning of the Persian monarchy. But both Nebuchadnezzar's dream which he interpreted, and his own visions, point at the Grecian and Roman monarchies, and very particularly at the Jews' troubles under Antiochus, which it would be of great use to them to prepare for; as his fixing the very time for the coming of the Messiah, was to all them that *waited* for the consolation of Israel, and is to us for the confirming of our belief. That this is he who should come, and we are to look for no other.

C H A P. I.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the beginning of Daniel's life, his original and education, than we have of any other of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, began immediately with divine visions, but Daniel began with the study of human learning, and was afterwards honoured with divine visions; such variety of methods has God taken in training up men for the service of his church. We have here, (1.) Jehoiakim's first captivity, ver. 1, 2. in which Daniel, with others of the seed royal, was carried to Babylon. (2.) The choice made of Daniel, and some other young men, to be brought up in the Chaldean literature, that they might be fitted to serve the government, and the provision made for them, ver. 3—7. (3.) Their pious refusal to eat the portion of the king's meat, and their determining to live upon pulse and water, which, having tried it, the master of the eunuchs allowed them to do, finding that it agreed very well with them, ver. 8—16. (4.) Their wonderful improvement above all their fellows in wisdom and knowledge, ver. 17—21.

1. **I**N the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2. And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. 3. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4. Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach: and to Mishael, of Mefhach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

We have in these verses an account,

1. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition, ver. 1, 2. He besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased, and what he pleased away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer, but then rebelled, and it was his ruin. Now from this first captivity, most interpreters think the seventy years are to be dated, though Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed till about nineteen years after. In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years, see ver. 21. during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, Jer. xxv. 11. So that this one prophet saw within the compass of his own time, the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; so that it was *res unius ætatis*; such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth, but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous that see them taking root, shall see their fall, Job v. 3. Prov. xxix. 10. Mr. Broughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt; thence to their entering Canaan forty years, thence seven years to the dividing of the land, thence seven Jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy began; thence to this first year of the captivity, seven seventies of years, 490, (ten Jubilees) thence to the return one seventy; thence to the death of Christ seven seventies more, and from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years.

Vol. II. No. CXL.*

2. The improvement he made of his success; he did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon, it was that denounced against Ileriah, for throwing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, Isa. xxxix. 6, 7. that the treasures and the children should be carried away, and if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but no further. If lesser judgments do the work, God will not send greater, but if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done:

2. The vessels of the sanctuary were carried away; part of them, ver. 2. They fondly trusted to the temple to defend them, though they went on in their iniquity: And now to shew them the vanity of that confidence the temple is first plundered; many of the holy vessels which used to be employed in the service of God, were taken away by the king of Babylon, those of them it is likely, that were most valuable, and he brought them as trophies of victory to the house of his god, to whom, with a blind devotion, he gave the praise of his success, and having appropriated these vessels in token of gratitude to his god, he put them in the treasury of his temple. See the righteousness of God; his people had brought the images of other gods into his temple, and now he suffers the vessels of the temple to be carried into the treasures of those other gods. Note, When men profane the vessels of the sanctuary with their sins, it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. It is likely the treasures of the king's house were rifled as was foretold, but particular mention is made of the taking away of the vessels of the sanctuary, because we shall find afterwards, that the profanation of them was it which filled the measure of the Chaldean iniquity, chap. v. 3. But observe, It was only part of them that went now, some were left them yet upon trial, to see if they would take the right course to prevent the carrying away the remainder. See Jer. xxvii. 18.

2. The children and young men, especially such as were of noble or royal extraction, that were rightly and promising, and of good natural parts were carried away. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children. These were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar. (1.) As trophies, to be made a shew of for the evidencing and magnifying of his success. (2.) As hostages, for the fidelity of their parents in their own land, who would be concerned to carry themselves well, that their children might have the better treatment. (3.) As a seed to serve him; he took them away to train them up for employments and preferments under him; either out of an unaccountable affection, which great men often have, to be attended by foreigners, though they be Blacks, rather than by those of their own nation; or because he knew that there were no such witty, sprightly ingenious young men to be found among the Chaldeans, as abounded among the youth of Israel; and if that were so, it was much for the honour of the Jewish nation, as of an uncommon genius above other people, and a fruit of the blessing: But it was a shame, that a people that had so much wit, should have so little wisdom and grace. Now observe,

1. The directions which the king of Babylon gave for the choice of these youths, ver. 4. They must not choose such as were deformed in body, but comely and well-favoured, whose countenances were indexes of ingenuity and good humour; but that is not enough, they must be *skilful in all wisdom and cunning, or well seen in knowledge, and understanding science*, that were quick and sharp, and could give a ready and intelligent account of their own country, and of the learning they had hitherto been brought up in. He chose such as were young, because they would be pliable and tractable, would forget their own people, and incorporate with the Chaldeans. He had an eye to what he designed them for; they must be such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, not only to attend his royal person, but to preside in his affairs. This is an instance of the policy of this rising monarch, now in the beginning of his reign, and was a good omen of his prosperity, that he was in care to raise up a succession of persons fit for public business. He did not, like Ahasuerus, appoint them to choose him out young women for the service of his lusts, but young men for the service of his government. It is the interest of princes to have wise men employed under them; it is therefore their wisdom to take care for the finding out and training up of such. It is the misery of this world, that so many that are fit for public stations are buried in obscurity, and so many that are unfit for them, are preferred to them.

2. The care which he took concerning them: (1.) For their education. He ordered that they should be taught the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. They are supposed to be wise and knowing young men, and yet they must be further taught; Give instruction to a wise man and he will increase in learning. Note, Those that would do good in the world when they are grown up, must learn when they are young. That is the learning age; if that time be lost, it will hardly be redeemed. What unlawful arts were used among the Chaldeans, magic and divination, it doth not appear that Nebuchadnezzar designed they should learn them; if he did, Daniel and his fellows would not defile themselves with them: Nay we do

not find that he ordered them to be taught the religion of the Chaldeans; by this it appears, he was at this time no bigot; if men were skilful and faithful, and fit for his business, it was not material to him what religion they were of, provided they had but *some* religion. They must be trained up in the language and laws of the country, in History, Philosophy, and Mathematics; in the Arts of Husbandry, War, and Navigation; in such earning as might qualify them to serve their generation. Note, It is real service to the public, to provide for the good education of youth.

(2.) For their maintenance. He provided for them *three years*, not only necessities but dainties for their encouragement in their studies; they had *daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank*, ver. 5. This was an instance of his generosity and humanity; though they were his captives; he considered their birth and quality, their spirit and genius, and treated them *honourably*, and studied to make their captivity easy to them. There is a respect owing to those who are well born and bred, when they are fallen into distress. With a *liberal education* there should be a *liberal maintenance*.

3. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows; they were of the *children of Judah*, the royal tribe, and probably of the house of David, which was grown a numerous family: and God told Hezekiah, that of the children that should *issue from him*, some should be taken and made eunuchs or chamberlains in the palace of the king of Babylon. The prince of the eunuchs changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to shew his authority over them and their subjection to him, and partly in token of their being *naturalized* and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision, had something of God or Jah in them; Daniel, *God is my judge*; Hananiah, *The grace of the Lord*; Mishael, *He that is the strong God*; Azariah, *the Lord is the help*. To make them forget the God of their fathers, the guide of their youth, they give them names that smell of the Chaldean idolatry; Belshazzar signifies, the *keeper of the kid treasures of Bel*; Shadrach, the *inspiration of the sun*, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshaeh, of the goddess Shach, under which name Venus was worshipped; Abednego, the *servant of the shining fire*, which they worshipped also. Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their conquerors, yet they did what they could by fair means, insensibly to wear them from the former and insil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for; though they suffered for their fathers' sins, they were preferred for their own merits: and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

8. ¶ But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself. 9. Now GOD had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. 11. Then Daniel said to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15. And at the end of ten days, their countenance appeared fairer and fatter in flesh, than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink: and gave them pulse.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,

1. That Daniel was a favourite with the prince of the eunuchs, ver. 9. as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison; he had a *tender love* for him. No doubt Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity and sweetness of temper; he was *greatly beloved*, chap. ix. 23. and yet it is said here, it was God that brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for every one doth not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for ourselves, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are *in favour*, it is God that has brought them into favour, and it is by him that they find good understanding. Herein was again verified that word, *Psal. cvi. 6. He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives*. Let young ones know, that the way to be acceptable is to be tractable and dutiful.

2. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature; whatever they pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them all to his books, and took pains to make himself master of the *learning and tongue of the Chaldeans*; but he was resolved he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat: he would not meddle with it, nor with the wine which he drank, ver. 8. And having communicated his purpose, with the reasons of it, to his fellows, they concurred in the same resolution, as appears, ver. 11. This was not out of fullness or peevishness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in itself unlawful for them to eat of the king's meat, or to drink of his wine: But, (1.) They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sinful. Sometimes such meat would be set before them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine's flesh; or they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats, *Lev. xi. 45, 46.* and these pious young men being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a *peculiar people*. Though they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for by that they most valued themselves. Note, When God's people are in Babylon they have need to take special care that they *partake not in her sins*. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives, they must eat what they could get, and must not disoblige their masters; yet, if the

command be against it, they must abide by that, though providence saith, *kill and eat*; conscience saith, *not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth*. (2.) They were jealous over themselves, lest, though it should not be sinful in itself, it should be an occasion of sin to them; lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, they should grow sinful and voluptuous, and in love with the pleasures of Babylon: they had learned David's prayer, *Let me not eat of their dainties*, *Psal. cxli.* and Solomon's precept, *Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat*, *Prov. xxiii. 3.* and accordingly they form their resolution. Note, It is very much the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense, not to covet them, not to relish them, but to look upon them with an indifference. Those that would excel in wisdom and in piety, must learn betimes to *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*. (3.) However, they thought it was unreasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves in captivity. They had no heart to drink wine in bowls, so much were they grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Though they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their mouths when they were thus brought low. Note, It becomes us to be humble under humbling providences. *Call me not Naomi, call me Mara*. See the benefit of affliction; by the account Jeremiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem it appears they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity would not defile themselves, no not with their portion of the king's meat. How much better is it with those that *retain their integrity* in the heights of prosperity! Observe, The great thing that Daniel avoided was dealing himself with the pollutions of sin; that is the thing we should be more afraid of than any outward trouble. Daniel having taken up this resolution, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself, not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it; that the bait might not be laid before him; that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king's meat, nor look upon the wine when it was red; it will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance than to suffer it to come near, and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour, than to make use of them to keep us from sin.

3. That God wonderfully owned him herein; when Daniel requested that he might have none of the king's meat or wine set before him, the prince of the eunuchs objected, that if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger, and of losing his head, ver. 10.

Daniel, to satisfy him that there would be no danger of any ill consequences, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself further to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward, *prove us for ten days*; during that time let us have nothing but pulse to eat, nothing but herbs and fruits or parched peas or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and proceed accordingly, ver. 13. People will not believe the benefit of abstemiousness and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made; Daniel and his fellows lived for ten days upon pulse and water, hard fare for young men of genteel extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have indented against than petitioned for; but at the end of the ten days they were compared with the other children, and were found fairer and fatter in flesh, of a more healthful look and a better complexion than all those which did eat the portion of the king's meat, ver. 15. This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, which will make a little to go a great way; a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that *man lives not by bread alone*; pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food if God speak the word. See what it is to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions of sin, it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be *health to the navel and marrow to the bones*, while the pleasures of sin are *rottenness to the bones*.

4. That his master countenanced him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but as they desired, gave them pulse and water, ver. 16. The pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance and contentment with mean things; and (as Epicurus said) "He that lives according to nature will never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich." This wonderful abstemiousness of these young men in the days of their youth contributed to the fitting of them, (1.) For their eminent services; hereby they kept their minds clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and saved for the best employments a great deal both of time and thought; and thus they prevented those diseases which indispose men for the business of age, that owe their rise to the intemperances of youth. (2.) For their eminent sufferings. They that had thus insured themselves to hardship, and lived a life of self-denial and mortification, could the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

17. ¶ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. 21. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows we have here,

1. Their great attainments in learning, ver. 17. They were very sober and diligent, and studied hard, and we may suppose their tutors finding them of an uncommon capacity, took a deal of pains with them, but after all their achievements are ascribed to God only: it was he that gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights; it is the Lord our God that gives men power to get this wealth; the mind is furnished only by him that formed it. The great learning which God gave these four children was, (1.) A balance for their losses; they had for the iniquity of their fathers been deprived of the honours and pleasures that would have attended their noble extraction; but to make them amends for that, God in giving them learning gave them better

better honours and pleasures than those they had been deprived of. (2.) A recompence for their integrity; they kept to their religion, even in the minutest instances of it, and would not so much as defile themselves with the king's meat or wine, but became in effect Nazarites, and now God rewarded them for it with an eminency in learning; for *God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy with them, Eccl. ii. 26.* To Daniel he gave a double portion, he had *understanding in visions and dreams*; he knew how to interpret dreams, as Joseph, not by rules of art, such are pretended to be given by the oneirocriticks; but by a divine sagacity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he was endued with a *prophetic spirit*, by which he was enabled to converse with God, and to receive the notices of divine things in dreams and visions, *Numb. xii. 6.* According to this gift given to Daniel, we find him in this book all along employed about dreams and visions, interpreting or entertaining them; for *as every one has received the gift, so shall he have an opportunity, and so should he have a heart to minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10.*

2. Their great acceptance with the king. After three years spent in their education, (they being of some maturity, it is likely when they came, perhaps about twenty years old) they were presented to the king with the rest that were of their standing, *ver. 18.* And the king examined them, and communed with them himself, *ver. 19.* He could do it, being a man of parts and learning himself, else he had not come to be so great. And he would do it; for it is the wisdom of princes in the choice of the persons they employ to see with their own eyes, to exercise their own judgment, and not trust too much to others representation. The king examined them not so much in the languages, in the rules of oratory or poetry, as in *all matters of wisdom and understanding*, the rules of prudence and true politics; he enquired into their judgment about the due conduct of human life and public affairs; nor were they wits, but were they wise? and he found them to excel not only the young candidates for preferment that were of their own standing, but that they had *more understanding than the ancients, than all their teachers*, *Psal. cxix. 99, 100.* So far was the king from being partial to his own countrymen, to seniors, to those of his own religion and of an established reputation, that he freely owned, that upon trial he found those poor young captive Jews ten times wiser and *better than all the magicians that were in all his realm*, *ver. 20.* He was soon aware of something extraordinary in these young men; and, which gave him a surprising satisfaction, was soon aware that a little of their true divinity, was preferable to a great deal of the divination he had been used to. *What is the chaff to the wheat! the magicians' rods to Aaron's!* There was no comparison between them; these four young students were better, were *ten times better* than all the old practitioners, put them all together, that were in *all his realm*, and we may be sure they were *not a few*. This contempt did God pour upon the pride of the Chaldeans, and this honour did he put upon the low estate of his own people: and thus did he make not only these persons, but the rest of their nation for their sakes, the more respected in the land of their captivity. Lastly, This judgment being given concerning them, they stood before the king, *ver. 19.* they attended in the presence chamber: nay, and in the council-chamber: for to see the king's face is the periphrasis of a privy-counsellor, *Ezth. i. 14.* This confirms Solomon's observation, *Seekest thou a man diligent in his business? sober and humble, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.* Industry is the way to preferment. How long the other three were about the court we are not told; but Daniel for his part continued to the first year of Cyrus, *ver. 21.* though not always alike in favour and reputation. He lived and prophesied after the first year of Cyrus; but that is mentioned to intimate that he lived to see the deliverance of his people out of their captivity, and their return to their own land. Note, Sometimes God favours his servants that mourn with Zion in her sorrows, to let them live to see better times with the church than they saw in the beginning of their days, and to share with her in her joys.

C H A P. II.

It was said, chap. i. 17. that Daniel had understanding in dreams; and here we have an early and eminent instance of it, which soon made him famous in the court of Babylon, as Joseph by the same means came to be so in the court of Egypt. This chapter is a history, but it is the history of a prophecy, by a dream and the interpretation of it. Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph's interpretation of it, related only to the years of plenty and famine, and the interest of God's Israel in them; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream here, and Daniel's interpretation of that, looks much higher, to the four monarchies, and the concerns of Israel in them, and the kingdom of the Messiah, which should be set up in the world upon the ruins of them. In this chapter we have, (1.) The great perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was put into by a dream which he had forgotten, and his command to the magicians to tell him what it was, which they could not pretend to do, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) Orders given for the destroying of all the wise men of Babylon, and of Daniel among the rest, with his fellows, *ver. 12—15.* (3.) The discovery of this secret to him in answer to prayer, and the thanksgiving he offered up to God thereupon, *ver. 16—23.* (4.) His admission to the king and the discovery he made to him both of his dream, and of the interpretation of it, *ver. 24—45.* (5.) The great honour which Nebuchadnezzar put upon Daniel in recompence for this service, and the preferment of his companions with him, *ver. 46—49.*

1. **A**ND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the forcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. 7. They

answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. 10. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. 12. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 12. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

We meet with great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, *ver. 1.* Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and it should seem he was three years under tutors and governors, before he was presented to the king, *chap. i. 5.* How then could this happen in the second year? Perhaps though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so pregnant, that he was taken into business when he had been but one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign a man, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign in partnership with his father. Some read it, and in the second year, (*viz.* the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king) in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign, this happened; as Joseph in the second year after his skill in dreams shewed, expounded Pharaoh's, to Daniel in the first year after he commenced master in that art did this service. I would much rather take it some of these ways, than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, because it appears by what we meet with in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom and prevalency in prayer long before that; and therefore this passage or story which shews how he came to be so eminent for both these must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now he we may observe,

1. The toils that Nebuchadnezzar was in by reason of a dream which he had dreamed, but had forgotten, *ver. 1. He dreamed dreams*, i.e. a dream consisting of divers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a multitude of dreams, strangely incoherent, in which *there are divers vanities*, *Eccl. v. 7.* This dream of Nebuchadnezzar's had nothing in the thing itself but what might be paralleled in many a common dream, in which are often represented to men things as foreign as this here; but there was something in the impression it made upon him, which carried with it an incontestable evidence of its divine original and its prophetic significance. Note, The greatest of men are not exempt from, nay they lie most open to those cares and troubles of mind which disturb their repose in the night, while the sleep of the labouring man is sweet and sound, and the sleep of the sober temperate man free from confused dreams; the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of gluttons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this here was not from natural causes? Nebuchadnezzar was a troubler of God's Israel, but God here troubled him, for he that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it. He had his guards about him, but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the uncleanliness of many that live in great pomp, and one would think in pleasure too. We look into their houses and are tempted to envy them, but could we look into their hearts we should pity them rather. All the treasures and all the delights of the children of men which this mighty monarch had the command of could not procure him a little repose, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his sleep brake from him: but God giveth his beloved sleep, who return to him as their rest.

2. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers, whether they could tell him what his dream was which he had forgotten. They were presently sent for to shew the king his dreams, *ver. 2.* The care many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things: though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream was slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but was confident he should know it if he heard it again. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and in him the God of Daniel. Note, God's sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds, as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them he had dreamed a dream, *ver. 3.* They speak to him in the Syriac tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldean, but now they differ much. And from henceforward Daniel useth that language or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, *Jer. x. 11.* are in that language, because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry, and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of the true and living God; which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to, but *chap. viii.* and forward being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They in their answer complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, *ver. 4.* But the king insisted upon it that they must tell him the dream itself; because he had forgotten it and could not tell it them. And if they could not do this they should all be put to death as deceivers, *ver. 5.* themselves cut to pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. If they could they should be rewarded and preferred, *ver. 6.* And they knew, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he was able to promote them to great honour, and gave them that wages of unrighteousness, which like him they loved so dearly; no question therefore they will do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good will but for want of power; providence so ordering it that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame, as of old the magicians of Egypt had been, that how much sorer his people were.

were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians having reason on their side insist upon it that the king must tell them the dream, and then if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, *ver. 7.* But arbitrary power is deaf to reason; the king falls into a passion, gives them a parcel of hard words, and without any colour of reason suspects that they could tell him, but would not; and instead of upbraiding them with impotency, and the deficiency of their heart, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him, *Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me:* how unreasonable and absurd is this imputation! if they had undertaken to tell him what his dream was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with *lying and corrupt words*, but to say this of them, when they honestly confessed their own weakness, only shews what senseless things indulged passions are; and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them they did but dally with him to *gain time*, *ver. 8. till the time be changed*, *ver. 9.* either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is *so hot upon it*. Or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgot his dream (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him apiece as he catcheth at them) that they may tell him what they please, and make him believe it was *his dream*, and when the thing which is *going*, is quite *gone from him*, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must *tell him the dream*. In vain do they plead, (1.) That there is *no man on earth* that can retrieve the king's dream, *ver. 10.* There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was, whether they will hold or no is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to *work upon*. They acknowledge that *the gods may indeed declare unto man what is his thoughts*, Amos iv. 13. for he *understandeth our thoughts asur off*, Psal. cxxxix. 2. what they *will be* before we think them, what they are when we do not regard them, and what they *have been* when we have forgot them. But those who can do this are gods that *have not their dwelling with flesh*, *ver. 11.* and it is they alone that can do this. As for men their *dwelling is with flesh*, the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh, which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirits, and their powers and operations; but the gods that are themselves pure spirits know what is *in man*. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of *many gods*, whereas there is but *one*, and can be but *one infinite*, yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teacheth, and the works of nature prove; that there is a God, who is a spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men and all their thoughts; so as it is not possible any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extorted from these idolaters, to the honour of God and their own condemnation, who, though they know there is a God in heaven, *to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid* yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols that have *eyes and see not, ears and hear not*. (2.) That there is no king on earth that would expect or require such a thing, *ver. 10.* This intimates, that they were *kings, lords, and potentates*, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God, and the gospel of Christ, are dispensed *to the poor*. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects; but they think never any required so unreasonable a thing as this, and therefore hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain, when passion is in the throne, reason is under foot; he was *angry and very furious*, *ver. 12.* Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason, to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury, what they cannot support with equity.

3. The doom passed upon all the magicians of Babylon, there is but *one decree for them all*, *ver. 9.* they all stand condemned without exception or distinction; the decree is gone forth, they must every man of them be slain, *ver. 13.* Daniel and his fellows (though they knew nothing of the matter) not excepted. See here, (1.) What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those traitors whose only fault is, that they would serve him, but cannot. (2.) What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders. How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence as to the ring-leaders in the imposture; God was righteous: they that imposed upon men in taking on them to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

14. Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15. He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, *Why is the decree so hasty from the king?* Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. 17. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18. That they would desire mercies of the GOD of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19. ¶ Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21. And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me

now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

When the king sent for his wise men to tell them his dream, and the interpretation of it, *ver. 2.* It seems Daniel was not summoned to appear among them; the king though he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him *ten times wiser* than the rest of his wise men, yet forgot him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done *in a heat*, and nothing with a cool and deliberate thought. But providence so ordered it, that the magicians being non-plussed, might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But though Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence he stands condemned with them, and till he has notice brought him to prepare for execution knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under an arbitrary government as this of Nebuchadnezzar's? how happy we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince?

We have found already in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer; as a *prince* he had *power with God and man*; by *prayer* he had power with God, by *prudence* he had power with man, and in both he *prevailed*: Thus did he *find favour and good understanding* in the sight of both. And in these verses we have a remarkable instance of both.

1. Daniel by *prudence* knew how to *deal with men*, and he *prevailed* with them. When Arioch the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel, (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, *devours one as well as another*) he *answered with counsel and wisdom*, *ver. 14.* he did not fall into a passion, and reproach the king as unjust and barbarous, much less did he contrive how to make resistance, but mildly asked *why is the decree so hasty?* *ver. 15.* And whereas the rest of the wise men had insisted upon it, that it was utterly impossible for him ever to have his demand gratified, which did but make him more outrageous, Daniel undertakes, if he may but have little time allowed him, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, *ver. 16.* The king being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed with to respite the judgment and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a *soft answer*; by that *yielding which pacifies great offences*; thus, though *where the word of a king is, there is power*, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here, *ver. 14. Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch the king's provost-marshal.*

2. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving, which are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe,

(1.) His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time, he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men, whether there was any thing in their art, in their books, that might be of use in this matter, but *went to his house*, there to be alone with his God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.

Observe, (1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He *made the thing known* to them, who had been all along his bosom-friends and associates, *that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret*, *ver. 17, 18.* though Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter. *Vis unita fortior*. See *Ester* iv. 16. Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; and it is good to have an intimacy with, and an interest in those that have fellowship with God, and an interest at the throne of grace. And it well becomes the greatest and best men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often bespokes his friends to pray for him. Thus we must shew that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon the general mercy of God. *That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret*, *ver. 18.* We ought in prayer to look up to God as the *God of heaven*, a God above us, and that has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who *can do every thing*; Our Saviour has taught us to pray to God as *our Father in heaven*. And whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the *mercies of God* for it, and an interest in those *mercies* we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of *recompence* for our *merits*, but all as the *gift of God's mercies*. They desired *mercy concerning this secret*. Note, Whatever is the matter of our care, must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning *this thing* and *the other thing*, that occasions us *trouble and fear*. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burthens. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns a *secret*, to him we must apply ourselves; and though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does *wonders* without *miracles*, for the discovery of that which is out of our ken, and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is *hid*, nothing is *hard*.

(3.) Their plea with God was, the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his fellows might *not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon*, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked. Note, When the lives of good and useful men are in danger, it is time to be in earnest with God for mercy for them, as for Peter in prison, *Acts* xii. 5.

(4.) The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for was bestowed. The *secret* was revealed unto Daniel in a *night vision*, *ver. 19.* Some think he dreamed the same dream when he was asleep that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; it should rather seem, that when he was awake, and continuing *instant in prayer*, and *watching in the same*, the dream itself and the interpretation of it was communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction. Note, The *effectual fervent prayer of righteous men availeth much*. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ hath said, *thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you*.

2. His grateful thanksgiving for this mercy when he had received it. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven, *ver. 19.* He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but is confident it is so, and that he had gained his point, and therefore immediately turns his prayers into praises; As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks in a full assurance that he had done it; and in both he had an eye to God as the *God of heaven*. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

1. The honour he gives to God in his thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression. *Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever.* There is that *for ever* in God which is to be blessed and praised, it is unchangeably and eternally in him. And it is to be blessed *for ever and ever*; as the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlasting in the doing. (1.) He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself; *wisdom and might are his.* *Wisdom and courage:* So some. Whatever is fit to be done he *will do*: whatever he *will do*, he *can do*, he *dare do*; and he will be sure to do it in the best manner, for he has infinite *wisdom* to design and contrive, and infinite *power* to execute and accomplish: *with him is strength and wisdom*, which in men are often parted. (2.) He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has an universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Doth every thing lie open to mutability? It is God that *changeth the times and the seasons*, and the face of them: No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God: Are those that were kings removed and deposed? Do they abdicate? Are they laid aside? It is God that *removes kings*; are the *poor raised out of the dust* to be set among princes? It is God that *setteth up kings*; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all power, *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords*. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, philosophers and statesmen, that think above the common rate, contemplative, penetrating men; it is *God that gives wisdom to the wise*, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that *gives knowledge to them that know understanding*; which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it, and make it our business to know him. (3.) He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praiseth him.

(1.) For that he *could make* such a discovery, *ver. 22.* He revealeth the deep and secret things, which are hid from the eyes of all living; it was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could, *Job xxviii. 27, 28.* It is he that reveals things to come to his servants the prophets; he doth himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most secret and most industriously concealed, for he will *bring into judgment every secret thing*, the truth will be evident in the great day. He knows what is in the darkness, and what is done in the darkness, for that *hides not from him*, *Psalm cxxxix. 11, 12.* The light dwells with him, and he dwells in the light, *1 Tim. vi. 16.* and yet as to us he *makes darkness his pavilion*. Some understand it of the light of prophecy and divine revelation, which dwells with God, and is derived from him: for he is the *Father of lights*, of all lights, they are all *at home* in him.

(2.) For that he *had made* this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; for though the Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their fathers' sakes. He praiseth God who is the fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him; wisdom to know this great secret, and might to bear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift. *Thou hast made this known to me, ver. 23.* What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans, that made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy then, when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known to him which was the saving of the lives of him and his fellows? Much more reason have we to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul; to us, and not to the world, to us, and not to the wise and prudent.

2. The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving: Though it was by his prayers principally that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him; both in praying for it, it is what *we desired of thee*; and in enjoying of it, thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Either they were present with Daniel when the discovery was made to him; or, as soon as he knew it, he told it them *ἐπεὶ, ἔπειτα, I have found it, I have found it*, that they who had assisted him with their prayers, might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him, is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well becomes those that are taken into communion with God. Thus St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us, we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

24. Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste; and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. 26. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27. Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29. As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaration of the dream, and the interpretation of it:

1. He immediately bespoke the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, *ver. 24.*

men of Babylon, *ver. 24.* He went with all speed to Arioch, to tell him his commission was now superseded, *Destroy not the wise men of Babylon.* Though there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here, that which they stood condemned for, was not a crime worthy of death or of bonds; and therefore let them not die, and be unjustly destroyed, but let them live, and be justly ashamed, as having been nonplused, and unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shews common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives even of bad men, *Matt. v. 45.* A good man is a common good: To Paul in the ship, God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who yet rendered not according to the benefit done to them, *chap. iii. 8.*

2. He offered his service with great assurance to go to the king, and tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it; and was admitted accordingly, *ver. 24, 25.* Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate himself, by introducing Daniel; he pretends he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince, and make their own services acceptable.

3. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians and to give honour to God upon this occasion. The king owned it was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good, *ver. 26.* Art thou able to make known unto me the dream? What! such a babe in this knowledge, such a stripling as thou art, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this, the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men, it has been God's usual way to make use of the weak and foolish things and persons of the world, and such as were despised and despaired of, to confound the wise and mighty, that the excellency of the power might be of him, *1 Cor. i. 27, 28.* Daniel from this takes occasion,

(1.) To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers whom he had such great expectations from, *ver. 27.* This secret they cannot shew to the king; it is out of their power, the rules of their art will not reach to it: Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do, but rather despise them, and cast them off because they cannot do it. Broughton reads it generally, This secret no judges, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers can shew unto the king; let not the king therefore consult them any more. Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction, should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions, we are baffled in our hopes from them, hitherto they come and no farther: let us therefore lay to them as Job to his friends, *now ye are nothing*; miserable comforters are ye all.

(2.) To bring him to the knowledge of the only living and true God; the God whom Daniel worshipped. Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, *ver. 28.* Note, The insufficiency of creatures should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. There is a God in heaven, and it is well for us there is, who can do that for us and make known that to us which none on earth can; particularly the secret history of the work of redemption, and the secret designs of God's love to us therein: the mystery which was hid from ages and generations; divine revelation helps us out there, where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that not only to kings, but to the poor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, *Rom. xvi. 25, 26.*

4. He confirmed the king in his opinion, that the dream he was thus solicitous to recover the idea of, was really well worth enquiring after, that it was of great value, and of vast consequence; not a common dream, the idle disport of a ludicrous and luxuriant fancy, not worth remembering or telling again; but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper worlds relating to the great affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it made known to the king what shall be in the latter days, *ver. 28. &c.* in the times yet to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, which was to be in the latter days, *Heb. i. 1.* And again, *ver. 29.* The thoughts which came into thy mind were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are, *Omnia quæ sensu voluntur voto diurno tempore sopito reddit amica quies.* *Claudian.* But they were predictions of what should come to pass hereafter, which he that revealeth secrets makes known unto thee: and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint, and pursuing it thus. Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter, are secret things which God only can reveal; and what he has revealed of those things, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently inquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake: Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was musing in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to, and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make, he thus prepares men for.

5. He solemnly professeth, that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own, *ver. 30.* But as for me, this secret is not found out by me, but revealed to me, and that not for any wisdom that I have more than any living, to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery. Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured, to be very humble and low in their own eyes; to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have all the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freeness of his good will towards them, and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him, not for his own sake, but (1.) For the sake of his people, for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king; for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and so might be said to make known the interpretation; that their lives might be spared, that they might come into favour and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better in their captivity for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God doth for them and by them, is more for others sakes than for their own. (2.) For the sake of his prince; and some read the former clause in this sense, not for any wisdom of mine, but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thine heart; that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before a considering of, and thereby instruction given thee how to carry it towards the church of God. God revealeth this thing to Daniel, that he might make it known to the king: Prophets receive that that they give; that the discoveries made them may not be lodged within themselves, but communicated to the persons themselves that are concerned

31. ¶ Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. 33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36. ¶ This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39. And after thee shall rise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been made much easier to him than to others of his brethren: and now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expence he had been at upon him; and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward. Such a reward as a prophet only could give; and for which that wealthy, mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is,

1. The dream itself, ver. 31—45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a great image is set before him in a dream; which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to, they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expence and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect, it stood before him, as a living man; and because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible, both the features of the face, and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image, was the different metals of which it was composed. The head of gold, the richest and most durable metal; the breast and arms of silver, the next to it in worth; the belly and sides, or thighs, of brass, the legs of iron, still baser metals; and lastly the feet, part of iron, and part of clay. See what the things of this world are; the further we go in them the less valuable they appear. In the life of man youth is a head of gold, but it grows less and less worthy of our esteem; and old age is half clay; a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world; later ages degenerate: The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold, but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of an hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, but feet of iron and clay; knows his duty but doth it not. Some observe, that in Daniel's vision the monarchies were represented by four beasts, chap. vii. for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing; But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. To him the sight was so charming that he was impatient to see it again.

But what became of this image? The next part of the dream shews it us

calced, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unseen power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the feet of the image that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces; and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold and silver, and brass and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small that they became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and there was not to be found any the least remains of them; but the stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain and filled the earth. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes; when he pleaseth a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold and silver and brass and iron might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, as this image was, and they shall perish from off the earth, and from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. Isa. ii. 19. And whatever power destroys idolatry is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself; as this stone when it had broke the image to pieces became a great mountain.

2. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is fit we take the explication of it. It should seem Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them as well as for himself when he saith, we will tell the interpretation, ver. 36. Now,

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth, that should successively bear rule among the nations, and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church: It was the same power, only lodged in four several nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, and the two latter westward.

1. The head of gold signified the Chaldean monarchy, which is now in being, ver. 37, 38. Thou, O king, art, or rather shalt be a king of kings; an universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries; or thou art the highest of kings on earth at this time; as a servant of servants is the meanest servant; thou dost outline all other kings. But let him not attribute his elevation to his own politics or fortitude; no, it is the God of heaven that has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firm, and shines bright, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power.

Note, The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth, ver. 38. that wheresoever the children of men dwell, in all the nations of that part of the world he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but those that were fierce nature, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven: He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chafes, and none were allowed to hunt fowl without his leave. Thus thou art this head of gold; thou and thy son, and thy son's son, for seventy years; compare this with Jer. xxv. 9—11. especially Jer. xxvii. 5, 6, 7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians, but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ's time. It is called a head for its wisdom and eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth, Isa. xiv. 4. it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring into it all the Assyrian kings, about fifty monarchs in all, and compute that it lasted about sixteen hundred years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor any thing like it: Therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold, and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic power than any of the kings that were before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current, Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

2. The breast and arms of silver, signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians; of which the king is told no more but this, there shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, ver. 39. not to rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms meeting in the breast. Cyrus was himself a Persian by his father, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted an hundred and thirty years, others two hundred and four years. The former computation agrees best with the scripture chronology.

3. The belly and thighs of brass signified the monarchy of the Grecians founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Codomannus, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the third kingdom of brass, inferior in wealth and extent of dominion to the Persian monarchy, but in Alexander himself it shall by the power of the sword bear rule over all the earth; for Alexander boasted, that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

4. The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt, the former governed by the family of the Seleucidae, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagidae, from Ptolemaeus Lagus; these they make the two legs and feet of this image; Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion, that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended; because it was in the time of that monarchy, and when it was in its height; that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The Roman kingdom was strong as iron, ver. 40. witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and afterwards quite destroyed the nation of the Jews, ver. 46. Towards the latter end of the Roman monarchy it grew very weak, branched into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of which were weak as clay, others strong as iron, ver. 42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain; they shall not cleave one to another, ver. 43. This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and the commons, but they did not entirely coalesce; there were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Caesar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when for the strengthening of the empire against the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried, but the politics had not the desired effect, when the day of the fall of that empire came.

2. The stone cut without hands represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the kingdoms of the world. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy, no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This was the stone which the builders refused, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it is now become the head stone of the corner.

1. The gospel church is a *kingdom*, which Christ is the sole and sovereign monarch of; in which he rules by his word and spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom *not of this world*, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

2. The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the New Testament called the kingdom of heaven, for its original is from above, and its tendency is upwards.

3. It was to be set up in the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy; which there is particular notice taken of, *Luke ii. 1.* That Christ was born when by the decree of the emperor of Rome all the world was taxed, which was a plain indication that that empire was become as universal, as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contending with each other, and in all the struggles the contending parties each hope to find their own account, God will do his own work, and fulfil his own counsels. These kings are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

4. It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall never be destroyed by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are, fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their prince, or the prince of his subjects; nor shall this kingdom be left to other people; as the kingdoms of the earth are: As Christ is a monarch that has no successor, for he himself shall reign for ever, so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was indeed taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, *Matt. xxii. 43.* But still it was Christianity that ruled the kingdom of the Messiah: The Christian church is still the same, it is fixed on a rock, much sought against, but never to be prevailed against by the gates of hell.

5. It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands brake in pieces the images, *ver. 44, 45.* The kingdom of Christ shall wear out all other kingdoms, shall outlive them, and flourish, when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted that their place knows them no more. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a rod of iron as a potter's vessel, *Psal. ii. 9.* And in the kingdoms that submit to the kingdom of Christ, tyranny and idolatry, and every thing that is their reproach as far as the gospel of Christ gets ground, shall be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have put down all rules, principality, and power, and have made all his enemies his footstool, and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, *1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.* Our Saviour seems to refer to this, *Matt. xxi. 44.* where speaking of himself as the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, he saith, *On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

6. It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had broke in pieces all about them, yet at length it came to their turn to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces, and shall itself stand for ever. His throne shall be as the days of heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the increase of Christ's government and peace, there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign for ever, not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and God shall be all in all to eternity.

Daniel having thus interpreted the dream to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption, so full was the interpretation that he had no question to ask, and so plain that he had no objection to make; he closes all with a solemn assertion, (1.) Of the divine original of this dream. The great God (so he calls him to express his own high thoughts of him, and to begot the like in the mind of this great king) he has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped to show things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods, *Isa. xlii. 23.* and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he declares the end from the beginning, *Isa. xlii. 10.* (2.) Of the undoubted certainty of the things foretold by his dream. He who makes known these things is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Note, Whatever God has made known we may depend upon.

46. ¶ Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. 48. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise-men of Babylon. 49. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting, he should have been enraged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it, and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but instead of resenting it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the impression it made upon him.

1. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery he had made both of his secret thoughts in telling him the dream, and of things to come in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, *ver. 46.* It was the custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have sometimes of a divine power in them, *I have said ye are gods.* And therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom

he supposed to have in him a divine knowledge; which he was so struck with an admiration of, that he could not contain himself, but forgot both that Daniel was man, and that himself was a king. Thus did God magnify divine revelation, and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should make an oblation to him, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may very well be excused when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better things. But though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said as St. Peter to Cornelius, *Stand up, I myself also am a man;* or, as the angel to St. John, *see, thou do it not:* for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him though the king commanded it; or rather said it; for so the word is. He said in his haste, *Let an oblation be offered to him.* And that Daniel did say something to him which turned his eyes and his thoughts another way, is intimated in what follows, *ver. 47.* The king answered Daniel. Note, It is possible for those to express a great honour for the ministers of God's word, who yet have no true love for the word. Herod feared John, and heard him gladly, and yet went on in his sins, *Mark vi. 20.*

2. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God: if Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) worship God, by confessing, *ver. 47.* Of a truth your God is a God of gods: such a God as there is no other; above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion. He is a Lord of kings, from whom they derive their power, and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a discoverer and a revealer of secrets; what is most secret he sees, and can reveal; and what he has revealed, is what was secret, and which none but he could reveal, *1 Cor. ii. 10.*

3. He preferred Daniel; made him a great man, *ver. 48.* God made him a great man indeed, when he took him into communion with himself; a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Doth wealth make men great? The king gave him many gifts, and he had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at or indented for by him, as therewards of divination were by Balaam. Doth power make a man great? He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, which, no doubt, had a mighty influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon, to instruct them whom he had thus outdone; and since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. Seeing Daniel could reveal this secret, *ver. 47.* the king thus advanced him. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those that receive divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, that as Daniel here shewed himself to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph like Daniel here was acquainted with the kingdom of Egypt for interpreting of his dreams; and he called him Zephaniah-paaneah, a revealer of his secrets, as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel, so that the preamble, to their patents of honour are the same; for and in consideration of their good services done to the crown in revealing secrets.

4. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, *ver. 49.* Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king, as president of the council, chief-justice, as prime minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household, but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They that had helped him with their prayers shall share with him in his honours, such a grateful sense had he even of that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which, no doubt, they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it that it may be easy to them.

C H A P. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in honour and power, princes of the provinces, and preferred for their relation to the God of Israel, and the interest they had in him; I know not whether I should say, it were well if this honour had all the saints. No, there are many whom it would not be good for, the saints honour is reserved for another world; but here we have those same three men as much under the king's displeasure as then they were in his favour: and yet more truly, more highly honoured by their God than there they were honoured by their prince; both by the grace wherewith he enabled them rather to suffer than to sin; and by the miraculous glorious deliverance he wrought for them out of their sufferings. It is a very memorable story, a glorious instance of the power and goodness of God, and a great encouragement to the constancy of his people in trying times. The apostle refers to it when he mentions, among the believing heroes, those who by faith quenched the violence of fire, *Heb. xi. 34.* We have here, (1.) Nebuchadnezzar's erecting and dedicating a golden image, and his requiring all his subjects, of what rank or degree soever, to fall down and worship it, and the general compliance of his people with that command, *ver. 1-7.* (2.) Information given against the Jewish princes for refusing to worship this golden image, *ver. 8-12.* (3.) Their constant persisting in that refusal, notwithstanding his rage and menaces, *ver. 13-18.* (4.) The casting of them into the fiery furnace for their refusal, *ver. 19-23.* (5.) Their miraculous preservation in the fire by the power of God, and their invitation out of the fire by the favour of the king, who was by this miracle convinced of his error in casting them in, *ver. 24-27.* (6.) The honour which the king gave to God hereupon, and the favour he shewed to those faithful worthies, *ver. 28, 29, 30.*

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was three score cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3. Then the princes, the governors, and captains,

the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up: and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5. That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story; only, that if this image that Nebuchadnezzar dedicated, had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable it happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away. Observe,

1. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Babylon was full of idols already, yet nothing will serve this imperious prince, but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the one only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have enough. Idolaters are fond of novelty and variety, they chuse new gods. They that have many will wish to have more. Nebuchadnezzar the king, that he might exert the prerogative of his crown, to make what gods he thought fit, set up this image, ver. 1. Observe, (1.) The value of it, it was an image of gold, not all gold sure, as rich as he was, it is likely he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshippers of false gods are not wont to stick at charges in setting up images and worshipping them; they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose, Isa. xvi. 6. which shames our niggardliness in the worship of the true God. (2.) The vastness of it: it was three score cubits high, and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times; for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six feet, as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being lifeless. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest, it was to clear himself from the imputation of being turned Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel, and had preferred some of his worshippers. Or perhaps he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it; proud princes affected to have divine honours paid them: Alexander did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympius. He was told, that in the image, he had seen in his dream, he was represented by the head of gold, who was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold: see here, 1. How the good impressions that were then made upon him were quite lost and quickly. He then acknowledged, that the God of Israel is of a truth a God of gods, and a Lord of kings; and yet now in defiance of the express law of that God, he sets up an image to be worshipped, not only continues in his former idolatries, but contrives new ones. Note, Strong convictions often come short of a sound conversion. Many in a pang have owned the absurdity and dangerousness of sin, and yet have gone on it. (2.) How that very dream and the interpretation of it, which made such good impressions upon him, now had a quite contrary effect. Then it made him fall down as an humble worshipper of God, now it made him set up a bold competitor with God. Then he thought it a great thing to be the golden head of the image, and owned himself obliged to God for it, but his mind rising with his condition, now he thinks, that too little, and in contradiction to God himself, and his oracle, he will be all in all.

2. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image, ver. 2, 3. Messengers are dispatched to all parts of the kingdom, to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers, or general receivers, the counsellors, and all the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, they must all come to the dedicating of this image, upon pain and peril of what shall fall thereon. He summons the great men for the greater honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ, that kings should bring presents unto him. If he can bring them to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course: in obedience to the king's summons, all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon to the dedication of this golden image; long journeys many of them took, and expensive ones upon a very foolish errand; but as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshippers.

3. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, under the stile and title of *The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up*. A herald proclaims this aloud throughout this vast assembly of grantees, with their numerous trains of servants and attendants, and a great croud of people, no doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice, (1.) That the king doth strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down and worship the golden image; whatever other gods they worship at other times, now they must worship this. (2.) That they must all do this just at the same time, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service: and that in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a concert of music, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity, and to sweeten and soften the minds of those that were both to yield, and to bring them to comply with the king's command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is owing to God who is a spirit.

4. The general compliance of the assembly with this command, ver. 7. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind instruments and hand instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, the melody of which they thought was ravishing, and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay; and immediately they all as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped

the golden image. And no marvel, when it was proclaimed, That whosoever would not worship this golden image, would be immediately thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, ready prepared for that purpose, ver. 6. Here was the charms of music to allure them into a compliance, and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptation, they all yielded. Note, That way that sense directs, the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship hath been set up and maintained.

8. ¶ Whereof at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12. There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13. ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15. Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17. If it be so, our God whom we serve; is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would be present at this assembly, when, it is likely, they knew for what intent it was called together: Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, either his business calling him away, or having leave from the king to withdraw; unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king's favour, that none durst complain of him for his non-compliance: but why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king's orders as far as they could, and would be ready to bear a public testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it enough not to bow down to the image, but being in office thought themselves obliged to stand up against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a golden image to them that worshipped it.

Now, 1. Information is brought to the king by certain Chaldeans against these three gentlemen, that they did not obey the king's edict, ver. 8. Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them were some of those magicians and astrologers that were particularly called Chaldeans, chap. ii. 2—4. who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had eclipsed them, and so had these his companions. They by their prayers had obtained the mercy which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and behold how they requite them, evil for good; for their love they are their adversaries. Thus Jeremiah stood before God to speak good for them, who afterwards digged a pit for his life, Jer. xviii. 20. we must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men. Or perhaps they were such of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferments; and who can stand before envy? They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty and the usual compliment, O king, live for ever, (as if they aimed at nothing but his honour, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting him upon that which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom) they beg leave, (1.) To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, That all manner of persons, without exception of nation or language, should fall down and worship this golden image; they put him in mind also of the penalty which by the law was to be inflicted upon recusants, that they were to be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, ver. 10, 11. It cannot be denied but that this was the law, whether a righteous law or no, ought to be considered. (2.) To inform him, that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, had conformed to this edict, ver. 12. It is likely Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare them, in making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information: but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them, (1.) They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence for them to disobey the king's command, that had shared so much of the king's favour. And besides the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous, to be of ill example, and to have an influence upon others; and therefore it was necessary it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people, commonly want not those about them who do all they can to make them worse. (2.) They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority, they have set no regard upon thee; for they serve not the gods thou serveest, and which

which thou requirest them to serve, nor *worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

2. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information. Nebuchadnezzar fell into a great passion, and in his rage and fury commanded them to be seized, *ver. 13.* How little was it to the honour of this mighty prince, that he had rule over so many nations, when at the same time he had no rule over his own spirit, that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him, when he was himself a perfect slave to his own brutish passions, and led captive by them? How unfit was he to rule reasonable men, who could not himself be ruled by reason? It needed not be a surprise to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had done it, and their religion which they had always adhered to, forbade them to do it: Nor had he any reason to think they did it in contempt of his authority, who had in all instances shewed themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince. But it was especially unreasonable at this time, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his golden image, to be in such a rage and fury, and so much to discompose himself. The discretion of a man one would think should at least have deferred his anger. True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and meekens it, but superstition, and a devotion to false gods, inflames mens passions, inspires them with rage and fury, and turns them into brutes. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, so was the wrath of this king; and yet when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him, and appeared with an undaunted courage, an unshaken confidence.

3. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no. (1.) The king asked them whether it was true, that they had not worshipped the golden image, when others did, *ver. 14.* Is it of purpose? so some read it, was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only through inadvertency that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to, and done so much for, you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known your duty to your prince; what! do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. (2.) He was willing to admit them to a new trial; if they did on purpose not do it before, yet it may be upon second thoughts they will change their minds; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand, *ver. 15.* (1.) The king is willing that music shall play again, only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not like the deaf adder stop their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers, and will worship the golden image, well and good, their former omission shall be pardoned. But, (2.) The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be cast into the fiery furnace, and shall not have so much as an hour's respite. Thus doth the matter lie in a little compass, turn or burn; and because he knew they buoyed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently sets him at defiance, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? let him if he can. Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, chap. ii. 47. Proud men are still ready to say, as Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* or, as Nebuchadnezzar, who is the Lord that I should fear his power?

4. They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution, not to worship the golden image, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* we have here such an instance of fortitude and magnanimity as is scarce to be paralleled; we call these the three children, and they were indeed young men, but we should rather call them, the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they thrust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way to court martyrdom, but when they were duly called to the fiery trial they quitted themselves bravely, with a conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause: The king was not so daringly bold in making this idol, but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant, or an idolater, the cause of God needs not the wrath of man, but with an exemplary, calmness and sedateness of mind, they deliberately give in their answer, which they resolve to abide by. Observe,

1. Their gracious and generous contempt of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that they are put to. O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. They do not in dullness deny him an answer, nor stand mute; but they tell him they are in no care about it. There needs not an answer, so some read it, they are resolved not to comply, and the king is resolved they shall die if they do not, the matter therefore is determined, and what needs it be disputed? But it is better read, we want not an answer for thee, nor have it to seek, but come prepared. (1.) They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer; for they did not in the least hesitate, whether they should comply or no. It was a matter of life and death, and one would think they might have considered a while before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful: But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question that, the life and death that were in the case, were not to be considered. Note, Those that would avoid sin must not parley with temptation; when that which we are allured or affrighted to is manifestly evil, the motion is rather to be rejected with indignation and abhorrence than reasoned with; stand not to pause about it, but say as Christ has taught us, get thee behind me, Satan. (2.) They needed no time to contrive how they should word it; while they were advocates for God, and were called out to witness in his cause, they doubted not but it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak, Matt. x. 19. They were not contriving an evasive answer, when a direct answer was expected from them, nor would they seem to court the king not to insist upon it; here is nothing in their answer that looks like compliment; they begin not as their accusers did, with O king, live for ever, no artful insinuation, ad captandam benevolentiam, but every thing that is plain and downright, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee. Note, Those that make their duty their main care, need not be careful concerning the event.

2. Their believing confidence in God, and their dependence upon him, *ver. 18.* This was it that enabled them to look with so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors, they trusted in the living God and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible, Heb. xi. 25, 27. If it be so, if we are brought to this strait, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace, unless we serve thy gods, know then, (1.) That though we worship not thy gods, yet we are not atheists, there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully

adhere. (2.) That we serve this God, we have devoted ourselves to his honour, we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provide for us, and reward us. (3.) Thus we are well assured this God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; whether he will or not we are sure he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace, or rescue us out of it. Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a master able to bear them out in his service, and to controul and over rule all the powers that are armed against them. Lord, if thou wilt thou canst. (4.) That we have reason to hope he will deliver us; partly because in such a vast appearance of idolaters, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them; and partly because Nebuchadnezzar had desired him to do it, Who is that God that shall deliver you? God sometimes appears wonderfully for the silencing of the blasphemies of the enemy, as well as for the answering of prayers of his people, Psal. lxxiv. 18—22. Deut. xxxii. 27. But if he do not deliver us from the fiery furnace, he will deliver us out of thy hand. He can but torment and kill the body, and after that there is no more that he can do, then they are got out of his reach, delivered out of his hand. Note, Good thoughts of God will help very much to carry us through sufferings, and a full assurance that he is with us while we are with him; and if he be for us, we need not fear what man can do unto us. Let him do his worst. God will deliver us either from death or in death.

3. Their firm resolution, however to stick to their principles, *ver. 18.* But if not, though God should not think fit to deliver us from the fiery furnace, which yet we know he can do; if he should suffer us to fall into thy hand, and fall by thy hand, yet be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve these gods, though they are thy gods, nor worship this golden image, though thou thyself hast set it up. They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, and tell the king to his face, that they do not fear him, they will not yield to him; would they have consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death: so great a death. (1.) They were not required to adjure their own God, or to renounce his worship, no, nor by any verbal profession or declaration to own this golden image to be a god, but only to bow down before it, which they might do with a secret reserve of their hearts for the God of Israel, inwardly detesting this idolatry, as Naaman bowed in the house of Rimmon. (2.) They were not to fall into a course of idolatry, it was but one single act that was required of them, which would be done in a minute, and the danger was over, and they might afterwards declare their sorrow for it. (3.) The king that commanded it had an absolute power, they were under it, not only as subjects but as captives, and if they did it, it was purely by coercion and duress, and that would serve to excuse them. (4.) He had been their benefactor, had educated and preferred them, and in gratitude to him they ought to go as far as they could, though it were to strain a point, a point of conscience. (5.) They were now driven into a strange country, and to those that were to be driven out, it was in effect, said, Go and serve other gods, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. It was taken for granted, that in their disposition they would serve other gods, and it was made a part of the judgment, Deut. iv. 28. They might be excused if they go down the stream, when it is so strong. (6.) Did not their kings and their princes, and their fathers, yea, and their priests too, set up idols even in God's temple, and worship them there, and not only bow down to them, but erect altars, burn incense, and offer sacrifices, even their own children to them? Did not all the ten tribes for many ages worship gods of gold at Dan and Bethel? And shall they be more precise than their fathers? Communis error facit jus. (7.) If they should comply they would save their lives and keep their places, and so be in a capacity to do a great deal of service to their brethren in Babylon, and to do it long; for they were young men and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God, wherewith to answer and silence these and many more such like carnal reasonings. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to any image, nor worship them. They know they must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin; and must not do evil that good may come. And therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity, than live in their iniquity: While their brethren, who yet remained in their own land were worshipping images of theirs, these here in Babylon would not be brought to it by constraint; but as if they were good by antiperistasis, were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous country. And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. These were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note, A steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty in lesser instances, will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater: And in this we must be resolute, never, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship images, or to be in confederacy with them that do so.

19. ¶ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the son of God. 26. ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace,

and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power; nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

In these verses we have,

1. The casting of these three faithful servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God, that one would have thought, though his pride and vanity carried him to make this golden image, and set it up to be worshipped, yet that what these young men now said, (whom he had formerly found to be wiser than all his *wisemen*) should have revived his convictions, and at least have engaged him to dispense with them: But it proved quite otherwise.

(1.) Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was *exasperated*, and made more outrageous, *ver. 19*. It made him *full of fury*, and the *form of his visage was changed* against these men. Note, Brutish passions, the more they are indulged the more violent they grow, and even *change* the countenance, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar in his heat, exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, or a judge upon the bench, for the frightful fury of a *wild bull in a net*: would men in a passion but view their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn all their displeasure against themselves.

(2.) Instead of mitigating their punishments in consideration of their quality, and the posts of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened, that they should *heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated* for other malefactors, *i. e.* that they should put seven times more fuel in it; which though it would not make their death more *grievous*, but rather dispatch them the sooner, yet was designed to signify, That the king looked upon their crime as *seven times* more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death more *ignominious*. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish instance of the tyrant's rage, for though it would not have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much the more illustrious.

(3.) He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; which was done accordingly, *ver. 20—22*. They were *bound* that they might not struggle or make any resistance; were bound in *their clothes*, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and gradually: But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their *hosen* or breeches, and their *hats*, or *turbans* as if in detestation of their crime they would have their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this! To be *cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*, *ver. 23*. It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and the confessors so stout-hearted as to submit to it rather than sin against God. But what is this to the *second death*? To that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles? To that lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone? Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it: But hell-fire tortures and doth not kill; the pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and the *smoke of their torments ascends for ever and ever*, and they have no rest, no intermission, no cessation of their pains, *who have worshipped the beast and his image*, *Rev. xiv. 1—11*. whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this furnace, for not worshipping this Babylonian *beast and his image*.

(4.) It was a remarkable providence that the men, the *mighty men*, that bound them and threw them into the furnace were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, *ver. 22*. The king's commandment was *urgent*, that they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually, and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them *into the midst* of it, but were in such haste, that they would not take time to arm themselves accordingly. The apocryphal additions to Daniel say, that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably, God ordered it so that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but *by it*. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty; he that bid them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very likely they did it with pleasure, and were glad to be so employed. And Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a further reckoning. There is a day coming when proud tyrants will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

2. The deliverance of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast bound into the midst of that devouring fire, we might well conclude, we should hear no more of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but to our amazement we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, are yet alive.

1. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire: *he was astonished*, and *rose up in haste*, *ver. 24*. Perhaps the slaying of the men that executed his sentence was that which astonished him, as well it might, for he had reason to think his own turn would be next; or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that *astonished* him, and made him *rise up in haste*, and go to the furnace to see what was become of those he had cast into it. Note, God can strike those with astonishment whose hearts are most hardened both against him, and against his people. He that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them whether *we did not cast three men bound into the fire*. It seems it was done by order, not only of the king, but of the council. They durst not but concur with him, which he forced them to do, that they might share with him in the guilt and odium. True, O king, say they; we did order such an execution to be done, and it was done; but now (saith the king) I have been looking into the furnace, and *I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire*, *ver. 25*. (1.) They were *loosed* from their bonds; the fire that did not so much as singe their clothes, burnt the cords where-with they were tied, and set them at liberty: thus God's people have their hearts enlarged through the grace of God, by those very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them. (2.) They

had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain, or uneasiness in the least; the flame did not scorch them, the smoke did not stifle them, they were alive, and as well as ever in the midst of the flames. See how the God of nature can, when he pleased, controul the powers of nature, and make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled in the letter that gracious promise, *Isa. xliii. 2*. *When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*. By faith they quench the violence of the fire, quench the fiery darts of the wicked. (3.) They walked in the midst of the fire: the furnace was large, so that they had room to walk; they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy so that they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise or garden of pleasure. Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? Prov. vi. 28. yes, they did it with as much pleasure as the king of Tyrus walked up and down in the midst of his stones of fire, his precious stone that sparkled as fire, *Ezek. xxvii. 14*. They were not striving to get out, finding themselves unhurt, but leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire to bring them out of it; they walked up and down in the midst of it unconcerned. One of the apocryphal writings relates at large the prayer which Azariah, one of the three, prayed in the fire, wherein he laments the calamities and iniquities of Israel, and intreats God's favour to his people: and the song of praise which they all three sung in the midst of the flames; in both which there are remarkable strains of devotion: but we have reason to think with Grotius, that they were composed by some Jew of a later age, not as what were used, but only as what might have been used on this occasion, and therefore we justly reject them as no part of the holy writ. (4.) There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was *like the son of God*; he appeared as a divine person, a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a son. *Like an angel*, so some, and angels are called *sons of God*, *Job xxxviii. 7*. In the apocryphal narrative of this story, it is said the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar here saith, *ver. 28*, that God sent his angel and delivered them; and *chap. vi. 22*. But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel: he appeared often in our nature before he assumed it for good and all; and never more seasonably, nor to give a more proper indication and preface of his great errand into the world in the fulness of time, than now, when to deliver his chosen out of the fire, he came and walked with them in the fire. Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need *fear no evil*. Hereby Christ shewed, that what is done against his people, he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace, doth in effect throw him in; *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*, *Mat. lxiii. 9*.

2. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace, *ver. 26*. He came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, bids them *come forth*, and *come hither*; *come forth, come*, so some read it: he speaks with a great deal of tenderness and concern, and stands ready to lend them his hand, and help them out. He is convinced by their miraculous preservation, that he did ill to cast them into the furnace, and therefore he doth not thrust them out *privily*, *no verily*, but he will come himself and fetch them out, *Acts xvi. 37*. Observe the respectful title that he gives them; when he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them, it is likely he called them rebels and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent, but now he owns them for the servants of the most high God; a God who now appears able to deliver them out of his hand. Note, Sooner or later God will convince the proudest of men, that he is the most high God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and presumptuously, *Exod. xviii. 11*. He will likewise let them know who are his servants, and that he owns them, and will stand by them. Elijah prayed, *1 Kings xviii. 36*. *Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant*. Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had abandoned, and is very officious about them now he perceives them to be the favourites of heaven. Note, What persecutors have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes, they must as far as they can undo again.

How the fourth, whose form was like the son of God, withdrew, and where he vanished away or visibly ascended, we are not told, but of the other three we are informed, 1. That they came forth out of the midst of the fire, as Abraham their father out of Ur, *i. e.* the fire of the Chaldees, into which, saith this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered, as those his three children were; when they had their discharge they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth as brands out of the burning.

2. That it was made to appear to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by the fire, *ver. 27*. All the great men came together to view them, and found that there was not so much as a hair of their head singed. Here that was true in the letter, which our Saviour spoke figuratively for an assurance to his suffering servants, that they should sustain no real damage, *Luke xxi. 18*. *They shall not a hair of your head perish*. Their clothes did not so much as change colour or smell of fire, much less were their bodies in the least scorched or blistered: no, the fire had no power on them. The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, as a sort of an image of the sun, so that in restraining the fire now, God put contempt not only upon their king but upon their god too, and shewed that his voice divides the flames of fire, as well as the floods of waters, *Psaln xxix. 7*. when he pleaseth to make a way for his people through the midst of it. It is our God only that is the consuming fire, *Heb. xii. 29*. other fire if he but speak the word shall not consume.

28. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

The strict observations that were made, *super visum corporis* by the princes, and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this public occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle, and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. That indeed a notable miracle has been done

is manifest, and we cannot deny it, Acts iv. 16. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

1. He gives glory to the God of Israel, as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers, ver. 28. *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.* Let him have the honour both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him, and the powerful protection he grants to them, neither of which can be paralleled between any other nation and their gods. The king doth himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit he should be acknowledged and adored by all: *Blessed be the God of Shadrach.* Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness even from those that have been ready to curse him to his face. (1.) He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malignant enemies. *There is no other God that can deliver after this sort,* ver. 29. no not this golden image, which he had set up. For this reason there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did; for they could not engage to bear them out in so doing as he could. If God can work such deliverances as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other may. (2.) He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it, ver. 28. *he hath sent his angel and delivered his servants.* Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace; because they refused to worship any other god. By this Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand, that all the great success which he had had, and should yet have against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as if he had therein overpowered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin: if the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God, and the worship of him only, as these three men did, they should all have been delivered out of his hand as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time.

2. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour, ver. 28. though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his, and to worship him, because if he do so, he knows he must worship him only, and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach, not my God; yet he commends them for sticking to him and not serving or worshipping any other God but their own. Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own they are clearly in the right that are religious, and are steadfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to cleave with it, they will commend those who having closed with it, cleave to it. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them stick to their principles, and serve him only whatever it cost them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to mens praise, even among them that are without; when unsteadiness, treachery, and double dealing, is what all men will cry shame on. He commends them that they did this, (1.) With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not in comparison with the favour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience. They yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him by once paying that homage to any other which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the worth and value of religion that do not think it worth suffering for. (2.) They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince: they changed the king's word, i. e. they went contrary to it, and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatenings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own, that when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is to be obeyed, and not they. (3.) They did it with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace to their place on earth, or lead them through the fiery furnace, forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became fearless of the king's wrath, and regardless of their own lives. Note, A steadfast faith in God will produce a steadfast faithfulness to God. Now this honourable testimony thus publicly borne by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well think would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were or should be captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do it, which their brethren were so highly applauded by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry; for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had had that blessed effect upon them, they might be assured God would deliver them out of that furnace, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

3. He issues out a royal edict, strictly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, ver. 29. We have reason to think, that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had given great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldeans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and it is likely Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it; but now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor suffer others to do so. *Whoever shall speak any thing amiss, any error, so some; or rather any reproach or blasphemy, whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, they shall be counted the worst of malefactors and dealt with accordingly, they shall be cut in pieces, as Agag by the sword of Samuel, and their houses shall be demolished and made a dunghill.* The miracle now wrought by the power of this God in defence of his worshippers publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict. And it would contribute much to the ease of the Jews in their captivity, to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed. Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies, though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopped, and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince laid such a restraint upon the proud lips of blasphemers, much more should Christian princes do it; nay, in this thing one would think men should be a law to themselves; and that those who have so little love to God, that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to speak any thing amiss of him.

4. He not only reversed the attainder of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government, makes them to prosper, so the world is, and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before. He promoted them in the province of Babylon, which was much to their honour, and the comfort of their brethren in captivity there. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer and employ men of steadfastness in religion, for those are most likely to be faithful to them who are faithful to God; and it is likely to be well with them, when God's favourites are made theirs.

C H A P. IV.

The penman of this chapter is Nebuchadnezzar himself: the story concerning him here recorded, is given us in his own words, as he himself drew it up and published it; but Daniel a prophet by inspiration, inserts it in his history, and so it is become a part of sacred writ, and a very observable part. Nebuchadnezzar was as daring a rival with God Almighty for the sovereignty, as perhaps any mortal man ever was; but here he fairly owns himself conquered, and gives it under his hand, That the God of Israel is above him. Here is, (1.) The preface to his narrative, wherein he acknowledgeth God's dominion over him, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The narrative itself, wherein he relates, (1.) His dream, which puzzled the magicians, ver. 1—18. (2.) The interpretation of his dream by Daniel, who shewed him that it was a prognostication of his own fall, advising him therefore to repent and reform, ver. 19—27. (3.) The accomplishment of it in his running stark mad for seven years, and then recovering the use of his reason again, ver. 28—36. (4.) The conclusion of the narrative, with an humble acknowledgment and adoration of God as Lord of all, ver. 37. This was extorted from him by the over-ruling power of that God who hath all men's hearts in his hand, and stands up in record a lasting proof of God's supremacy, a monument of his glory, a trophy of his victory, and a warning to all not to think of prospering, while they lift up or harden their hearts against God.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

Here is, first, something of form, which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters issued out by the king, ver. 1. The royal stile which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of, has nothing in it of pomp or fancy, but plain and short and unaffected; *Nebuchadnezzar the king.* If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title, now he laid them all aside; for he was old, he was lately recovered from a distraction which had humbled and mortified him, and was now in the actual contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty. The declaration is directed not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come; to all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth. He is not only willing they should all hear of it, though it carry the account of his own infamy (which perhaps none durst have published, if he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel published the original paper.) But he strictly chargeth and commandeth all manner of persons to take notice of it; for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutes those to whom he writes in the usual form, *Peace be multiplied unto you.* Note, It becomes kings with their commands to disperse their good wishes, and as fathers of their country to bless their subjects. So the common form with us; *We send greeting, Omnibus quibus hæ præsentis literæ pervenerint, salutem;* and sometimes *salutem sempiternam,* Health and salvation everlasting.

2. Something of substance and matter. He writes this,

1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had been concerning him, ver. 2. *I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God (so he calls the true God) has wrought towards me.* He thought it seemly, so the word is, that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now he was recovered from his distraction, to relate to distant places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously he had at length restored him. All the nations no doubt had heard what befel Nebuchadnezzar and rung of it, but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but a matter of religion. The events concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instructed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Note, We ought to shew to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under, and the favours we have received; and though the account hereof may reflect disgrace upon ourselves, as this here did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may redound to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they deserved it? whereas we ought to give glory to God not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our sins, accepting the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here doth.

2. To shew how much he was himself affected with them, and convinced by them, ver. 3. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness, and shew ourselves affected with those great things of God, which we desire others should take notice of.

1. He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed, *How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders!* Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world and the revolutions of it as most men ever did, and yet never till now when himself was nearly touched was he brought to admire surprising events as God's signs and his wonders: *Now how great, how mighty are they!* Note, The more we see events to be the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of a divine power, and the conduct of a divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, Psalm cxviii. 23. lxxvi. 2.

2. He infers from thence God's dominion. This is what he is at length brought to subscribe to. *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,* and not like his own kingdom, which he saw, and long since foresaw in a dream, hastening towards a period. He now owns there is a God that governs the world, and has an universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom that it is everlasting; other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's dominion is from generation to generation. It should seem Nebuchadnezzar here refers to what Daniel had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up that should never be destroyed, chap. ii. 44. which though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable practical use and application of those prophetic scriptures, which yet we do not fully, and perhaps not rightly, take the meaning of.

4. ¶ I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. 8. ¶ But at the last Daniel came in before me, (whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods): and before him I told the dream, saying, 9. O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 10. Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the ends of all the earth. 12. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. 15. Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him. 17. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. 18. This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, for as much as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God, that had been brought upon him for his pride, gives an account of the fair warning he had of them before they came, which if he had duly regarded, they might have been prevented. But therefore he was told of them, and of the issue of them before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see and say, that they were the Lord's doing: and might be brought to believe, that there is a divine revelation in the world, as well as a divine providence, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe.

1. The time when this alarm was given him, ver. 4. It was when he was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace. He had newly conquered Egypt, and with it completed his victories and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world, which was about the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year of his reign, Ezek. xxix. 17. Then he had this dream, which was accomplished about a year after, seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration, lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is at rest in his house; and there is no adversity, nor evil occurrence. Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his terrors then when they are most secure, and think themselves at rest and flourishing.

2. The impression it made upon him, ver. 5. I saw a dream, which made me afraid. One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance, yet when God pleaseth a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed no doubt was soft and easy and well guarded, and yet his own thoughts upon his bed make him uneasy, and the visions of his head, the creatures of his own imagination, trouble him. Note, God can make the greatest of men uneasy, even then when they say to their souls, Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry; can make those that have been the troublers of the world and have tormented thousands to be their own troublers, their own tormentors; and those that have been the terror of the mighty a terror to themselves. By the consternation which this dream put him into and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

3. His consulting in vain with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgot the dream as before, chap. ii. He had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it, and what was prefigured by it, ver. 6. Orders are immediately given to summon all the wise men of Babylon, that were such fools as to pretend by magic, divination, inspecting the entrails of beasts, or observations of the stars, to predict things to come: they must come all together, to see if any or all of them in consultation could interpret the king's dream. It is likely these

people had sometimes in a like case given the king some sort of satisfaction, and by the rules of their art had answered the king's queries so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now his expectation from them was disappointed, he told them the dream, ver. 7. but they could not tell him the interpretation of it; though they had boasted with great assurance, chap. ii. 4—7. that if they had but the dream told them they would without fail interpret it. But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy, Ezek. xxxi. 3, &c. where the Assyrian is compared as Nebuchadnezzar here, to a tree cut down, for his pride; and that was a book they had not studied or acquainted themselves with, else they might have been let into the mystery of this dream. Providence ordered it so that they should be first puzzled with it, that Daniel's interpreting it afterwards might redound to the glory of the God of Daniel. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah foretold, chap. xlvii. 12, 13. that when the ruin of Babylon was drawing on, her enchantments and sorceries, her astrologers and star-gazers, should not be able to do her any service:

4. The court he made to Daniel to engage him to expound his dream to him. At the last Daniel came in, ver. 8. Either he declined associating with the rest because of their badness, or they declined his company because of his goodness, or the king would rather his own magicians should have the honour of doing it if they could, than that Daniel should have it: Or Daniel being governor of the wise men, chap. ii. 48. was, as is usual, last consulted. Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off from all other succours. He compliments Daniel very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy, and that it was a good omen, his name was Belteshazzar, from Bel, the name of my God; he applauds his rare endowments, he has the spirit of the holy gods, so he tells him to his face, ver. 9. with which we may suppose Daniel was so far from being puffed up, that he was rather very much grieved, to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill-deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions. (1.) He retains the language and dialect of his idolatry, and therefore it is to be feared is no convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech bewrayeth him. For he speaks of many gods, and is not brought to acquiesce in one as sufficient, no not in him who is all-sufficient. And some think when he speaks of the spirit of the holy gods, he supposeth that there are some evil malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship, only to prevent their doing them a mischief: and some that are good beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of them Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was his god still, though he had once and again acknowledged the God of Israel to be Lord of all, chap. ii. 47. iii. 20. He also applauds Daniel, not as a servant of God, but as master of the magicians, ver. 9. supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in degree; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a topping magician; so endeavouring to save the credit of the art, when those blundered and were nonplussed who were masters of the art. See how close his idolatry sat to him: he has got a notion of many gods, and hath chosen Bel for his god, and he cannot persuade himself to quit either his notion or his choice, though the absurdity of both had been evidenced to him more than once beyond contradiction. He, like other heathens, would not change his gods though they were no gods, Jer. ii. 11. Many persist in a false way, only because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See how loose his convictions sat; and how easily he had dropped them: he once called the God of Israel a God of gods, chap. ii. 47. Now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the holy gods. Note, If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they are quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar not going forward with the acknowledgments he had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backward, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet, (2.) He professeth a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight, as none of his magicians had; I know that no secret troubleth thee. Note, The spirit of prophecy quite outdoes the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges, for so it was adjudged here upon a fair trial of skill.

5. The particular account he gives him of his dream:

1. He saw a stately flourishing tree, remarkable above all the trees of the wood. This tree was planted in the midst of the earth, ver. 10. fitly representing him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world: his dignity and eminency above all his neighbours was signified by the height of this tree, which was exceeding great, it reached unto heaven: he over-topped those about him, and aimed to have divine honours given him: nay, he overpowered those about him; and the potent armies he had the command of, with which he carried all before him, is signified by the strength of this tree: it grew and was strong: And so much was Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him; some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye, that the sight of this tree is said to be to the end of all the earth. This tree had every thing in it that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food, ver. 12. The leaves thereof were fair; noting the pomp and splendor of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use. (1.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat and from the storm, should expose themselves to secure them, and study how to make them safe and easy; If the bramble be promoted over the trees, he invites them to come and trust in his shadow, such as it is, Judg. ix. 15. It is protection that draws allegiance. The kings of the earth are to their subjects but as the shadow of a great tree; but Christ is to his subjects as the shadow of a great rock, Isa. xxxii. 2. Nay, because that though strong, yet may be cold, they are said to be hid under the shadow of his wings, Psal. xvii. 8. where they are not only safe but warm. (2.) For provision. The Assyrian was compared to a cedar, Ezek. xxxi. 6. which affords shadow only; but this tree here had much fruit, in it was meat for all, and all flesh was fed of it. This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only was great, but did good; he did not impoverish but enrich his country, and by his power and interest abroad brought wealth and trade to it. They that exercise authority would be called benefactors, Luke xxii. 25. and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority, is to be really benefactors. And see what is the best that great men with their wealth and power can attain to, and that is to have the honour of having many to live upon them, and to be maintained by them; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read; which he perfectly remembered, and relates it here, perhaps, word for word as he heard it. This sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw come down from heaven, and heard him proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called a watcher, or watchman; not only because angels by their nature are spirits, and therefore

fore neither *slumber nor sleep*; but because by their office they are *ministering spirits*, and attend continually to their administration, *watching* all opportunities of serving their great master. They as *watchers* encamp round them that *fear God*, to deliver them, and *bear them up in their hands*. This angel was a *messenger, or ambassador*, so some read it; and a *holy one*. *Holiness becomes God's house*, therefore angels that attend, and are employed by him are *holy ones*; they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the divine will.

Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

1. Orders are given that it be *cut down*, ver. 14. now also *the axe is laid to the root* of this tree. Though it is never so high, never so strong, that cannot secure it when its day comes to fall; the beasts and fowls that are sheltered in and under the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed; the branches are *cropped*, the *leaves shaken off*, and the *fruit scattered*. Note, *Worldly prosperity in its highest degrees is a very uncertain thing*; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power, to be stripped of all that which they trusted to and gloried in. By the turns of providence, those that made a figure become captives; that lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and lived far below what they had; and those perhaps are brought to be beholden to others, who, when time was had many depending upon them, and making suit to them. But the *trees of righteousness that are planted in the house of the Lord*, and bring forth fruit to him, shall not be cut down nor shall their leaf wither.

2. Care is taken that the root be preserved, ver. 15. *Leave the stump of it in the earth*, exposed to all weathers, there let it lie neglected and buried in the *grass*, let the beasts that formerly sheltered themselves under the boughs, now repose themselves upon the stump; but that it may not be raked to pieces, or trodden to dirt, and to shew that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with a *band of iron and brass* to keep it firm. Note, God in judgment remembers mercy; and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is *hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that through the scent of water it will bud*, Job xiv. 7, 8, 9.

3. The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 16. whoever is the person signified by this tree, he is sentenced to be deposed from the honour, state, and dignity of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute till *seven times pass over him, let a beast's heart be given unto him*. This is surely the saddest and forest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and though, like it, least felt by those that lie under it, yet to be dreaded and deprecated more than any other. Nay, whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the *use of our reason*, and the *peace of our consciences*. But those proud tyrants who *set their heart as the heart of God*, Ezek. xxviii. 2. justly may be deprived of the heart of man, and have a *beast's heart* given them.

4. The truth of it is confirmed, ver. 17. *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones*. God has determined it as a righteous judge, he has signed this edict, pursuant to his eternal counsel the decree is gone forth: And (1.) The angels in heaven have subscribed to it; as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is *by the decree of the watchers*? not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or doth, but as he useth their ministration in executing their counsel, so he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he advised with them; *whom shall I send?* Isa. vi. 8. *who shall persuade Ahab?* 1 Kings xxi. 20. so it notes the solemnity of this sentence: the king's breves or short writs pass. *Teste me ipso*, but charters used to be signed, *His testibus*, In presence of us whose names are under written; such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom, it was by the decree of the watchers. (2.) The saints on earth petitioned for it, as well as the angels in heaven; *the demand is by the word of the holy ones*. God's suffering people that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance; they made the demand; and God gave this answer to it; for when the oppressed cry to God, he will hear, Exod. xxii. 27. This sentence was passed in Ahab's time, that there should be no more rain, at Elijah's word, when he made *intercession against Israel*, 1 Kings xvii. 1.

4. The design of it is declared; therefore orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, *to the intent, that the living may know that the most High rules*. This judgment must be executed to convince the unthinking, unbelieving world; that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, a God that governs in the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but rules also in the kingdom of men, in the dominion that one man has over another, and giveth that to whomsoever he will, from his promotion comes, Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. He advanceth men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosseth the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he sets up the basest of men, and serves his own purposes by them; mean men, as David from the sheep-fold; *raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, Psal. cxlii. 7, 8. Nay, sometimes he sets up ill men, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often doth, and gives not account of any of his matters. By humbling Nebuchadnezzar it was designed that the living should be made to know this. The dead know it, that are gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution, they know that *the most High rules*; but the living must be made to know it, and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before it be too late.

Thus had Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw, and what he heard; and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it, ver. 18. for he found no one else was able to do it, but his confident he was, for *the spirit of the holy gods is in thee*, or of the *holy God*; the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the *Spirit of the holy God*. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream, doth not appear; perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine, that it was some other prince that was a rival with him, whose fall he had the pleasing prospect of given him in this dream; but be it for him or against him, he is very solicitous to know the true meaning of it, and depends upon Daniel to give it him. Note, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments, we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear the *Lord's voice crying in the city*.

19. ¶ Then Daniel whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20. The tree that thou saw-

est, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth: 21. Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23. And whereas the king saw a watcher, and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down and destroy it: yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24. This is the interpretation O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25. That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; which when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is *the tree*, in the dream, *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*: when once it is said, *Thou art the man*, there needs little more to be said for the explication of the dream, *out of his own mouth he is judged*; so shall his doom be, himself has decided it. The thing was so plain, that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was *astonied for an hour*, ver. 19. He was struck with amazement and terror at so great a judgment coming upon so great a prince; his *flesh trembled for fear of God*. He was likewise struck with confusion, when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king these heavy tidings; which, having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else: so far is he from desiring the woeful day that he dreads it, and the thoughts of it trouble him. *They that come after the ruined sinner*, are said to be *astonied at his days*, as they that went before and saw it coming as Daniel here, were *affrighted*, Job xviii. 20.

The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment which as a courtier he passeth upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and thinking he was loth to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly and faithfully with him. *Let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee*. This he speaks either, (1.) As one that sincerely desireth to know the truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or, (2.) As one that despiseth the truth, and set it at defiance: when we see how regardless he was of this warning, afterwards we are tempted to think this was his meaning. *Let it not trouble thee*, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart. But whether he have any concern for himself or no Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, *The dream be to them that hate thee*. Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies not on thine head. Though Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was at present Daniel's prince, and therefore, though he foresees and is now going to foretel ill concerning him, he dares not wish ill to him.

2. The interpretation itself is only a repetition of the dream with application to the king. As for *the tree* which thou sawest *flourishing*, ver. 20, 21. *It is thou, O king*, ver. 22. And willing enough would the king be to hear this, as before to hear, *Thou art the head of gold*, but for that which follows. He shews the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream; *thy greatness is grown and reacheth as near heaven as human greatness can do, and thy dominion is to the end of the earth*, chap. ii. 37, 38. As for the doom passed upon the tree, ver. 23. *It is the decree of the most High, which comes upon my lord the king*, ver. 24. He must not only be deposed from his throne, but *driven from men*, and being deprived of his reason, and having a *beast's heart* given him, his dwelling shall be *with the beasts of the field*, and with them he shall be a fellow creature; he shall eat grass as oxen, and like them lie out all weathers, and be wet with the dew of heaven; and this till *seven times* pass over him, i. e. *seven years*, and then he shall know that the *most High rules*; and when he is brought to know and own that, he should be restored to his dominion again, ver. 26. *Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee*, shall remain as firm as the *stump of the tree* in the ground, and thou shalt have it, after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. God is here called the heavens, because it is in heaven that he hath prepared his throne, Psal. ciii. 19. from thence he beholdeth all the sons of men, Psal. xxxiii. 13. The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's; and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth, is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world; we are said to *fight against heaven*, Luke xv. 18. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and overment of both ourselves and others, when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to and dominion over us and all we have.

3. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet gave the king, ver. 27. whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable; if careless to awaken him, if troubled, to comfort him: and it is not inconsistent with the dream and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction, Observe, (1.) How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect. *O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee*, take it in good part, as coming from love and well meant, and let it not be misinterpreted.

Note, Sinners need to be coerced to their own good, and spoken fair to do well for themselves. The apostle beseeches men to *suffer the word of exhortation*, Heb. xiii. 22. We think it a good point gained if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly; nay, if they will take it patiently. (2.) What his advice is; he doth not counsel him to *enter into a course of physic* for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to *break off a course of sin* that he was in; to reform his life: he wronged his own subjects, and dealt unfairly with his allies, and he must *break off* this by *righteousness*, by rendering to all their due, making amends for wrong done, and not triumphing over right with might: he had been cruel to the poor, to God's poor, to the poor Jews, and he must *break off* this iniquity by *showing mercy* to those poor, *pitying those oppressed ones*, setting them at liberty, or making their captivity easy to them. Note, It is necessary in repentance, that we not only *cease to do evil*, but *learn to do well*; not only do no wrong to any, but do good to all. (3.) What the motive is with which he backs this advice; *if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*. Though it should not wholly prevent the judgments, yet by this means a reprieve may be obtained, as by *Ahab's humbling himself*, 1 Kings xxi. 29. either the trouble may be the longer before it come, or the shorter when it doth come; yet he cannot assure him of this, but *it may be*, it may prove so. Note, the very probability of preventing a temporal judgment, is inducement enough to a work to good in itself, as the leaving off our sins and reforming of our lives, much more the certainty of preventing our eternal ruin. *That will be an healing of thine error*, so some read it; thus the quarrel will be taken up, and all will be well again.

28. ¶ All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty? 31. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee. 32. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know, that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel or displeased; but here we have,

1. God's patience with him; all this came upon him, but not till twelve months after, ver. 29. so long there was a *lengthening of his tranquillity*, though it doth not appear that he *broke off his sins*, or shewed any *mercy to the poor captives*, for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he *opened not the house of his prisoners*, Isa. xiv. 17. Daniel having counselled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word, that he gave him *space to repent*; let him alone this year also, this one year more; before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is therefore long-suffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that *any should perish*, but that *all should come to repentance*, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. His pride and haughtiness, and abuse of that patience. He walked upon the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which with all the territories thereunto belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was shewing his kingdom, and the glory of it, *Is not this great Babylon?* Yes, it is great, of vast extent, no less than forty-five miles compass within the walls. It is full of inhabitants, and they full of wealth; it is a golden city, and that is enough to speak it great, Isa. xiv. 4. See the grandeur of the houses, wall, towers, and public edifices; every thing in Babylon he thinks *looks great*; and this *great Babylon I have built*. Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he had *fortified and beautified* it, and we may suppose much of it was *rebuilt* during his long and prosperous reign, he boasts that he has built it: as Augustus Caesar boasted concerning Rome, *Lateritium inveni marmoreum reliqui*; he boasts that he built it for the house of the kingdom, i. e. the metropolis of his empire. This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but as one house: he built it with the assistance of his subjects, yet boasts that he did it *by the might of his power*; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it *purely for the honour of his majesty*. Note, Pride and self-conceit is a sin that most easily besets great men, who have great things in the world. They are apt to take the glory to themselves which is due to God only.

3. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting and vaunting himself and adoring his own shadow, while the proud word was in the king's mouth, the powerful word came from heaven by which he was immediately deprived, (1.) Of his honour as a king; *The kingdom is departed from thee*; when he thought he had erected impregnable bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now in an instant *it is departed from him*; when he thought it so well guarded that none could take it from him, behold it departs of itself. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands. (2.) He is deprived of his honour as a man, he loseth his reason, and by that means loseth his dominion; *they shall drive thee from men*, ver. 32. And it was fulfilled, ver. 33. he was *driven from men the same hour*, i. e. On a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all fours like a brute; did himself shun the society of reasonable creatures, and run wild in the fields and woods: and was driven out by his own servants, who after some time of trial, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more. He had not the spirit of a beast of prey, nor that of the royal lion, but of the abject and less honourable species, for he was made to *eat grass as oxen*; and probably he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think his body was all covered with hair, however the hair of his head and beard being never cut or combed, grew like *eagles' feathers*, and his nails like birds' claws.

Let us pause a little and view this miserable spectacle; and let us receive instruction from it. (2.) Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason, how thankful we ought to be for it, and how careful we ought to be not to do any thing which may either provoke God, or may have a natural tendency to put us out of the possession of our own souls. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and to pity the case of those that are under the prevailing power of melancholy or distraction, or are delirious, and to be very tender in our censures of them, and carriage towards them, for it is a temptation common to men, and a case which some time or other may be our own. (2.) Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness: is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What this despicable animal, that is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious on the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now hath not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back: *Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms*, Isa. xiv. 16. Never let the wise man then glory in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his strength. (3.) Let us see here how God resists the proud, and delights to abase them and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be *more than a man*, and therefore God justly makes him *less than a man*, and puts him upon a level with the beasts that set up for a rival with his Maker. See Job xl. 11, 12, 13.

34. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. 35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? 36. At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords fought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, at the end of the days prefixed, i. e. of the seven years; so long he continued a monument of God's justice, and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride: and he was made more so by being *struck mad*, than if he had been in an instant *struck dead* with a thunderbolt. Yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive, for while there is life there is hope that we may yet praise God, as he did here. At the end of the days, (saith he) *I lift up mine eyes unto heaven*, ver. 34. looked no longer down towards the earth as a beast, but began to look up as a man; *as homini sublime dedit*. But there was more in it than so; he looked up as a devout man, as a penitent, as a humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till now made sensible of his own misery. And now,

1. He hath the use of his reason so far restored to him, that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told, that he should continue in that forlorn case, till he should know *that the most High rules*, and here we have him brought to the knowledge of that; *mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High*. Note, Those may be justly reckoned void of understanding that do not bless and praise God, nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men, till they live to the glory of God. As reason is the *substratum* or subject of religion, so that creatures which have no reason are not capable of religion; so religion is the crown and glory of reason, and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not glorify God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason, and when this became the employment of it, he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other employments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things, he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the great end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment, that was soon forgotten like a dream, but he is made to feel it, and then his ear is opened to discipline. To bring him to himself he must first be *beside himself*. And by this it appears, that what good thoughts there were in his mind, and what good work was wrought there, was not of himself, for he was not his own man, but it was the gift of God.

Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it *what to believe concerning God*.

1. That the most high God lives for ever, and his being knows neither change nor period, for he has it of himself: His flatterers often complimented him with, *O king live for ever*; but he is now convinced there is no king *lives for ever*, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself everlasting, and his dominion from generation to generation; there is no succession, no revolution in his kingdom; As he lives, so he reigns for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That all nations before him are as nothing; he has no need of them, he makes no account of them. The greatest of men in comparison with him are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God, think meanly of themselves.

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth are his subjects, and under his check and controul. Both angels and men are employed by him, and accountable to him; the highest angels are not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are his armies, the inhabitants of the earth his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for he doth according to his will, according to his design and purpose, according to his decree and counsel; whatever he pleaseth that he doth; whatever he appointeth, that he performeth; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, or stay his hand, or say unto him, *what dost thou?* none can arraign his proceedings, enquire into the meaning of them, or demand a reason for them. Woe to him that strives with his Maker: that saith to him, *What dost thou?* or, *Why dost thou so?*

6. That

6. That every thing that God doth is well done, his *works are truth*, for they all agree with his word. *His ways are judgment*, both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiest of his enemies that act in contradiction to him or competition with him; *those that walk in pride he is able to abase them*, ver. 37. he is able to deal with those that are most confident of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

2. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity, ver. 36. *At the same time my reason returned to me*; he had said before, ver. 34. that his *understanding returned to him*, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. Now his *lords fought to him*, he did not need to seek to them, and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason, and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was *more fit to rule than ever*. It is likely the dream and the interpretation of it was well known, and much talked of at court; and the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that according to the prediction he should come to himself again at seven years end; and in confidence of that, when the time was expired, were ready to receive him; and then his *honour and brightness returned to him*, the same he had before his madness seized him. He is now *established in his kingdom as firm as if there had been no such interruption given him*; he becomes a *fool that he may be wise*, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy, has now *excellent majesty added to him*, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom, conquering and to conquer. Note, 1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin and a believing acknowledgement of his sovereignty, then, and not till then, they may expect that God will put honour upon them; will not only restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but *and excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam*. 2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over him, he is then restored to a dominion over himself. 3. All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to this kingdom, he *praises, and extols, and honours the King of heaven*, ver. 37. before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a *capacity of praising him*, and therefore our prosperity, that we may have *cause to praise him*.

It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign. Abydenus quoted by Eusebius (*Præp. Evang.* l. 9.) reports from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his death-bed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that here he seems to have been in, we are not told, nor doth any thing appear to the contrary but that he did; and if so great a blasphemer and persecutor did find mercy, he was not the last. And if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he *lost his wits* for a while that he might *save his soul* for ever.

CHAP. V.

The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon had been long and often foretold when it was at a distance; In this chapter we have it accomplished, and a prediction of it the very same night that it was accomplished. Belshazzar now reigned in Babylon; some compute he had reigned seventeen years, others but three; we have here the story of his exit, and the period of his kingdom. We must know that about two years before this Cyrus king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylon with a great army, Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. He and his scattered forces retired into the city, where Cyrus besieged them; They were very secure, because river Euphrates was their bulwark, and they had twenty years provision in the city; but in the second year of the siege he took it, as is here related. We have in this chapter, (1.) The riotous, idolatrous, sacrilegious feast which Belshazzar made, in which he filled up the measure of his iniquity, ver. 1—4. (2.) The alarm given him in the midst of his jollity by a hand-writing on the wall, which none of his wise men could read or tell him the meaning of, ver. 5—9. (3.) The interpretation of the mystical characters by Daniel, who was at length brought into him, and dealt plainly with him, and shewed him his doom written, ver. 10—28. (4.) The immediate accomplishment of the interpretation in the slaying of the king and seizing of the kingdom, ver. 30, 31.

1. BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem: that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. 3. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of GOD which was at Jerusalem: and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5. ¶ In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. 7. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the sooth-sayers. And the king shake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8. Then came in all the king's wife men: but they could not read the writing, nor

make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

We have here Belshazzar the king very gay, but all of a sudden very chagrin, and in straits in the fulness of his sufficiency. See how he affronts God and God affrights him, and wait what will be the issue of this contest; and whether he that hardened his heart against God prospered.

1. See how the king affronted God and put contempt upon him. He made a great feast, or banquet of wine; probably it was some anniversary solemnity, in honour of his birth-day, or coronation day, or some of their idols; historians say, that Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and presuming that they then would be off their guard; *somno vinoque sepulti*, took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited a thousand of his lords to come and drink with him: Perhaps they were such as had signalized themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers; or these were his great counsel of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine before them, for it was the pride of those eastern kings to be seldom seen. He drank wine before them, for he made this feast, as Ahasuerus did, to shew the honour of his majesty.

Now in this sumptuous feast,

1. He put an affront upon the providence of God, and bid defiance to his judgments. His city was now besieged, a powerful enemy was at his gates, his life and kingdom lay at stake: In all this the hand of the Lord was gone out against him, and by it he called him to *weeping and mourning and girding with sackcloth*. God's voice cried in the city, as Jonah to Nineveh, *yet forty days or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed*; he should therefore, like the king of Nineveh, have proclaimed a fast; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and behold joy and gladness, *slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine*, as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13*. To shew how little fear he had of being forced to surrender for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by the judgments of God, may expect to be wounded by them.

1. He put an affront upon the temple of God, and bid defiance to his sanctuary, ver. 2, while he tasted the wine he commanded to bring the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them. When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, O, said he, it is a pity but we should have holy vessels to drink such delicate wine as this in; which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were presently sent for. Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolick, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel; the heart of his people was very much upon these sacred vessels, as appears by *Jer. xxvii. 16—18*. Their principal care in their return was about these, *Ezra. i. 7*. Now we may suppose they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a period, and some of them might perhaps have given out some words to that purpose, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them, in defiance of which Belshazzar here proclaims them to be his own, will keep them in store no longer, but make use of them among his own plate. Note, That mirth is sinful indeed and fills the measure of men's iniquity apace, which profanes sacred things and jests with them. This ripened Babylon for ruin, that no songs, would serve them but the songs of Zion, *Psal. cxxxvii. 3*. no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour know that he will not be mocked.

3. He put an affront upon God himself, and bid defiance to his deity; for they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, ver. 5. They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised them either with sacrifices offered to them, or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were giddy, and their hearts merry with wine, they were in the fittest frame to praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone; for one would think men in their senses, that had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be intoxicated ere they could be so insatiable. Drunken worshippers, that are not men but beasts, are the most proper for the service of dunghill deities, that are not gods, but devils. They have erred through wine, *Isa. xxviii. 7*. They drank wine and praised their idol gods, as if they had been the founders of their feast, and the givers of all good things to them. Or, when they were drinking wine, they praised their gods, by drinking healths to them, and the king drank wine before them, ver. 1. i. e. he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the *dead-roll or sarrago* of them, those of wood and stone not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness strengthen the hands, and advance the interest one of another. Drunken frolics were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a sliding-horn to further drunkenness.

2. See how God affrighted the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in the midst of their revels, the cups going round apace, and all upon the merry pin, drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out huzzas in confidence of the speedy raising of the siege; but the hour was come when that must be fulfilled which had been long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes, *Isa. xxi. 2, 3, 4*. The night of my pleasures has he turned into fear to me. The mirth of this ball at court must be spoiled, and a damp cast upon their jollity, though the king himself be master of the revels; presently, when God speaks the word, we have him and all his guests in the utmost confusion, and the end of their mirth heaviness.

1. There appear the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaister of the wall before the king's face, ver. 5. The angel Gabriel, say the Rabbins, directing these fingers and writing by them. "That divine hand (saith a Rabbi of our own, Dr. Lightfoot) that had written the two tables for a law to his people, now writes the doom of Babel and Belshazzar upon the wall." Here was nothing sent to frighten them which made a noise, or threatened their lives; no claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning; no destroying angel with his sword drawn in his hand; only a pen in the hand, writing upon the wall, over against the candlestick where they might all see it by the light of their own candle. Note, God's written word is sufficient to put the proudest, boldest sinners into a fright, when he is pleased to give it the setting on. The king saw the part of the hand that wrote, but saw not the person whose hand it was, which made the thing more frightful. Note, What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes, in the book of the creatures, and the book of the scriptures, (*Lo, these are parts of his ways*, Job, xxvi. 14) may serve to possess us with awful thoughts.

thoughts that of God which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm made bare? And what is he?

2. The king is immediately seized with a panic fear, *ver. 6.* His countenance was changed; his colour went and came, the joints of his loins were loosed, so that he had no strength in them, but was struck with a pain in the back, as is usual in a great fright; his knees smote one against another, so violently did he tremble like an aspen leaf. But what was the matter? Why is he in such a fright? He perceives not what is written, and how doth he know but it may be some happy presage of deliverance to him and to his kingdom? But the business was, His thoughts troubled him; his own guilty conscience flew in his face, and told him he had no reason to expect any good news from heaven, and that the hand of an angel could write nothing but terror to him: he that knew himself liable to the justice of God presently concludes this as an arrest in his name, a summons to appear before him. Note, God can soon awaken the most secure, and make the heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble; and there needs no more to do it, but to let loose his own thoughts upon him, they will soon play the tyrant, and give him trouble enough.

3. The wise men of Babylon are presently called in to see what they can make of this writing upon the wall, *ver. 7.* The king cried aloud as one in haste, as one in earnest, to bring the whole college of magicians; to try if they can read this writing, and shew the interpretation of it: for the king and all his lords cannot pretend to it, it is out of their sphere; the study of divine revelation (such as they had, or thought they had) and converse with the world of spirits, was by the heathen confined to one profession, and none other meddled with it; but what is written to us by the finger of God is legible to all; whoever will may read the mind of God in the scriptures. To engage these wise men to exert the utmost of their skill in this matter, and provoke them to an emulation in the attempt, he promiseth that whoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing should be dignified with the highest honours of the court; he knew what these pretenders to wisdom aimed at, and what would please them, and therefore promiseth them a scarlet robe, and a golden chain, glorious things in their eyes that know no better. Nay, he should be *primus par regni*, chief minister of state, the third ruler in the kingdom, next to the king and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them; they could none of them read the writing; much less interpret it, *ver. 8.* which increased the king's confusion, *ver. 9.* he likes the thing yet worse and worse, and fears that mischief is towards him. His lords also that had been partners with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were astonished and at their wits end; and neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the wise men could not read the writing, was not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but God either cast a mist before their eyes, or put such confusion upon their spirits that they could not read it, that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened convinced conscience, may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

10. ¶ Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet-house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and sooth-sayers; 12. Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. 13. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14. I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16. And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 17. ¶ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18. O thou king, the most high GOD gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: 19. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21. And he was driven from the sons of men;

and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high GOD ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this: 23. But hast lifted up thyself against the LORD of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them: and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the GOD in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: 24. Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. 25. ¶ And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28. PERES; thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. 29. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel in scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Here is, 1. The information given to the king, by the queen-mother concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed that this queen was the widow of Evil-Merodach, and was that famous Nitocris, whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the king's wife and concubines were, *ver. 2.* it was not agreeable to her age and gravity, to keep a merry night. But tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into, being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banquetting house to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She bespeaks him not be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wise men to solve this riddle, for there was a man in his kingdom that had more than once helped his grandfather at such a dead lift and no doubt could help him, *ver. 11, 12.* She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directs him to one that could; let Daniel be called now who should have been called first. Now observe,

(1.) The high character she gives of Daniel. He is a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, who has something in him more than human, not only the spirit of a man, which in all is the candle of the Lord, but a divine spirit. According to the language of her country and religion, she could not give an higher encomium of any man: she speaks honourably of him as a man that had, (1.) An admirable good head, light and understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods was found in him. Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was divinely inspired; he had knowledge and understanding beyond all the other wise men for interpreting of dreams, explaining enigmas or hard sentences, untying knots, and dissolving doubts. Solomon had a wonderful sagacity of this kind, but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction, Behold a greater than Solomon himself is here; yet what was the wisdom of them both, compared with the treasures of wisdom hid in Christ? (2.) He had an admirable good heart. An excellent spirit was found in him; which was a great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for God giveth to a man, that is good in his fight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. He was of an humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of God, and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

(2.) The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him; he was much in his books, and was preferred by him. The king thy father (that is, thy grandfather, but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised it to such a pitch of grandeur) the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians. Perhaps Belshazzar had sometimes in his pride spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar and his politics, and the methods of his government and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he, and therefore his mother harps upon that, The king, I say, thy father, to whose good management all thou hast is owing, he pronounced him chief of and gave him dominion over all the wise men of Babylon; and named him Belshazzar; according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him; but Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself, (which he resolved to stick to, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion) had worn out that name; only the queen dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel. Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men, who are themselves modest and willing they should be forgotten.

(3.) The motion she makes concerning him; let Daniel be called and he will shew the interpretation. By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court; Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom; with the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside. Note, There are a great many valuable men, and such as might be made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity; and some that have done eminent services, that live to be overlooked and taken no notice of; but whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel being turned out of his place, lived privately and sought not any opportunity to come into play again; yet he lived near the court and within call, though Babylon was now besieged, that he might be ready if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones, for the children of his people. But providence so ordered it, that now just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen's means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preferment in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

2. The introducing of Daniel to the king, and his request him to read

and expound the writing. Daniel was brought in before the king, ver. 13. He was now nearly ninety years of age, so that his years and honours, and former preferments, might have entitled him to a free admission into the king's presence, yet he was willing to be conducted in as a stranger, by the master of the ceremonies. Note, (1.) The king asks with an air of haughtiness, *Art thou that Daniel who art of the children of the captivity?* Being a Jew, and a captive, he was loth to be beholden to him, if he could have helped it. (2.) He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him, ver. 14, *that the spirit of the gods was in him*: and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved to high a character or no. (3.) He acknowledgeth that all his wife men of Babylon were baffled, they could not read this writing, nor shew the interpretation, ver. 15. But, (4.) He promiseth him the same rewards he had promised them if he would do it, ver. 16. It was strange the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar's time, once and again, they were nonplussed, did not offer at something to save their credit; if they had with a good assurance said this is the meaning of such a dream, such a writing, who could disprove them? But God so ordered it, that they had nothing at all to say, as when Christ was born the heathen oracles were struck dumb.

3. The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystic characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears, that we may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young, and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and roundly with him, than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances, for they are the reproofs of instruction that are the way of life. In Daniel's discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to shew them the interpretation of it, ver. 15. He slight the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is none of those that *divine for money*; what gratuities Nebuchadnezzar gave him afterwards he thankfully accepted them, but he scorned to indent for them, or to read the writing to the king, for and in consideration of such and such honours promised him. No, *Let thy gifts be to thyself*, for they will not be long thine, and *give thy fee to another*, to any of the wife men which thou hadst most mind should have earned it, I value it not: Daniel sees his kingdom now at its last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards this world can give, did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on: let it give its perishing gifts to another, there are better gifts which we have our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, *read God's writing*, do it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation *make known the interpretation* of it, and then trust God for his gifts, his rewards, in comparison with which all the world can give is mere trash and trifles.

2. He largely recounts to the king God's dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, ver. 18; 19, 20, 21. This is not intended for a flourish or an amusement, but it is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing, Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.

(1.) He describes the great dignity and power to which the divine providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 18, 19. He had a kingdom and majesty and glory and honour, for ought we know above what any heathen prince ever had before him; now he thought he got it by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting active genius of his own. But Daniel tells him, who now enjoyed what he had laboured for, that it was the most high God, the God of gods, and Lord of Lords, as Nebuchadnezzar himself had called him, that gave him that kingdom, that vast dominion, that majesty, wherewith he presided in the affairs of it, and that glory and honour which by his prosperous management he acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive to, they must own it is of God's giving, not their own getting. Let it never be said, *My might, and the power of my hand hath gotten me this wealth*, this preferment, but let it always be remembered, that it is God that gives men power to get wealth, and gives success to their endeavours. Now the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great in respect both of ability and of authority. (1.) His ability was so strong, that it was irresistible; such was the majesty that God gave him, so numerous the forces he had at command, and such an admirable dexterity he had at commanding them, that which way soever his sword turned it prospered; he could captivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for *all the people trembled and feared before him*, and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it doth: It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world, of mankind, both govern and is governed. (2.) His authority was so absolute, that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descended upon him, or which at least he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotic, none shared with him either in the legislative or the executive part of it; but in dispensing punishments he condemned or acquitted at pleasure, *whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive*, though both were equally innocent, or equally guilty; the *Jus vitæ & necis*, was intirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferments at pleasure, *whom he would set up, and whom he would put down*, merely for a humour, and without giving a reason so much as to himself: but it is all *ex mero motu*, and *ut pro ratione voluntas*. Such was the constitution of the eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings.

(2.) He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had provoked God against him. (1.) He carried it insolently towards those that were under him, and grew tyrannical and oppressive. The description given of his power intimates his abuse of his power, and that he was directed in what he did by humour and passion, not by reason and equity; so that he often condemned the innocent and acquitted the guilty, both which are an abomination to the Lord. He deposed men of merit, and preferred unworthy men to the great detriment of the public, and for this he is accountable to the most high God that gave him his power. Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it, as a rare instance, concerning our king Henry the second of England, that never any man had so much power and did so little hurt with it.

*Glorio hoc uno, quod nunquam vidimus unum,
Nec potuisse magis, nec nocuisse minus.*

But this was not all. (2.) He carried it insolently towards the God above him, and grew proud and haughty, ver. 20. His heart was lifted up, and there is sin and ruin begun; his mind was hardened in pride, hardened against the commands of God and his judgments, he was wilful and obstinate, and neither God's word nor rod made any lasting impression upon him. Note, Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sins, and renders the means of repentance and reformation ineffectual.

VOL. II. No. CXLII.*

(3.) He reminds him of the judgments of God that were brought upon him for his pride and obstinacy. How he was deprived of his reason, and so deposed from his kingly throne, ver. 20. *driven from among men to dwell with the wild asses*, ver. 21. He that would not govern his subjects by rules of reason, had not reason sufficient for the government of himself. Note, justly doth God deprive men of their reason, when they become unreasonable and will not use it, and of their power when they become oppressive and use it ill. He continued like a brute till he knew and embraced that first principle of religion, *That the most high God rules*. And it is rather by religion than reason, that man is distinguished from and dignified above the beasts; and it is more his honour to be a subject of the supreme Creator, than to be a lord of the inferior creatures. Note, Kings must know, or shall be made to know that the most high God rules in their kingdoms, that is an *imperium in imperio*, not to be excepted against; and that he appoints over them whomsoever he will. As he makes heirs, so he makes princes.

3. In God's name he exhibits articles of impeachment against Belshazzar; before he reads him his doom; from the hand writing on the wall, he shews him his crime, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Now that which he lays to his charge is,

(1.) That he had not taken warning by the judgments of God upon his father, ver. 22. *Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this*. Note, It is a greater offence to God if our hearts be not humbled before him to comply both with his precepts and with his providences, humbled by repentance, obedience and patience: nay, he expects from the greatest of men that their hearts should be humbled before him, by an acknowledgment, that as great as they are, to him they are accountable. And it is a great aggravation of the unhumbleness of our hearts, when we know enough to humble them, but do not consider and improve it; particularly when we know how others have been broken, that would not bend, how others have fallen that would not stoop, and yet we continue stiff and inflexible. It makes the sin of children the more heinous, if they tread in the steps of the parents wickedness, though they have seen how dear it has cost them, and how pernicious the consequences of it have been. Do we know this, do we know all this, and yet are we not humbled?

(2.) That he had affronted God more impudently than Nebuchadnezzar himself had done; witness the revels of this very night, in the midst of which he was seized with this horror, ver. 23. *Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven*, hast swelled with rage against him, and taken up arms against his crown and dignity, in this particular instance, that thou hadst profaned the vessels of his house, and made the utensils of his sanctuary instruments of thine iniquity, and in an actual designed contempt of him hast praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know any thing, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees and hears, and knows every thing. Sinners that are resolved to go on in sin, are well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they may sin securely; but they will find to their confusion that though those are the gods they choose, those are not the gods they must be judged by, but one to whom all things are naked and open.

(3.) That he had not answered the end of his creation and maintenance; the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways hast thou not glorified. This is a general charge which stands good against us all, look how we shall answer it. Observe, (1.) Our dependence upon God as our creator, preserver, benefactor, owner, and ruler; not only from his hand our breath was at first, but in his hand our breath is still, it is he that holds our souls in life, and if he take away our breath we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. In him we live and move and have our being, we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, nor at his own command, at his own dispose, but his are all our ways, for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, even of kings, who seem to act most as free agents. (2.) Our duty to God in consideration of this dependence: we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service: to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. (3.) Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we have all sinned and have come short of the glory of God. This is the indictment against Belshazzar, there needs no proof, it is made good by the notorious evidence of the fact, and his own conscience cannot but plead guilty to it. And therefore,

(4.) He now proceeds to read the sentence as he found it written upon the wall, Then, (saith Daniel) when thou wast come to such a height of impiety as thus to trample upon the most sacred things, then when thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers, sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, and who had born so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them and this writing thou now seest was written, ver. 24. It is he that now writes bitter things against thee, and makes thee to possess thine iniquities, Job xiii. 26. Note, As the sin of sinners is written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law: and the day is coming when those books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them.

Now the writing was, *Mene Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, ver. 25. It is well we have an authentic exposition of them annexed, else we could make little of them, so concise are they; the signification of them is, *he hath numbered, he hath weighed, and they divide*. The Chaldean wife men, because they knew not that there is but one God only, could not understand who this He should be, and for that reason (some think) the writing puzzled them.

1. *Mene*, that is repeated, for the thing is certain, *Mene Mene*; that signifies, both in Hebrew and Chaldee, *he hath numbered and finished*; which Daniel explains thus, ver. 26. *God hath numbered thy kingdom*, i. e. the years and days of the continuance of it, these were numbered in the counsel of God and now they are finished; the term is expired for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom.

2. *Tekel*, that signifies in Chaldee, *thou art weighed*, and in Hebrew, *thou art too light*. So Dr. Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of divine equity; God doth as perfectly know his true character as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the nicest scales. God doth not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case. But thou art found wanting; unworthy to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain lightempty man; a man of no weight or consideration.

3. *Upharsin*, which should be rendered, and *Pharsin*, or *Peres Parsin*, in Hebrew signifies the Persians; *Paresin*, in Chaldee, signifies dividing; Daniel puts both together, ver. 28. *Thy kingdom is divided*, is rent from thee, and given to the Medes and Persians, as a prey to be divided among them.

Now this may without any force be applied to the doom of sinners: *Menc, Tekel, Percs*, may easily be made to signify *death, judgment, and hell*. At death the sinner's days are numbered and finished; after death the judgment; when he will be weighed in the balance, and found wanting; and after judgment the sinner will be cut asunder, and given as a prey to the devil and his angels. Daniel doth not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree was gone forth, and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought Belshazzar should have been exasperated against Daniel, and, seeing his own case desperate, should have been in a rage against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said, that he objected nothing against it; but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown, and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom, ver. 29. because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault, if the exposition of the hand-writing was not such as he desired. Note, Many shew great respect to God's prophets, who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value these titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them; because they were tokens of his prince's good-will: but we have reason to think he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that bestowed them. They were like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceeding glad of them.

30. ¶ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Here is, 1. The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terrors, ver. 30. In that night when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace, there they found the king, and gave him his death's wound; he could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprise, with the assistance of two deserters that shewed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, Jer. li. 11—39. Note, Death comes as a snare upon those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.

2. The transferring of the kingdom into other hands. From the head of gold we now descend to the breast and arms of silver; Darius the Mede took the kingdom, in partnership with, and by the consent of Cyrus, who had conquered it, ver. 31. They were partners in war and conquest, and so they were in dominion, chap. vi. 28. Notice is taken of his age, that he was now sixty-two years old; for which reason Cyrus, who was his nephew, gave him the precedency. Some observe, that he being now sixty-two years old in the last year of the captivity, he was born in the eighth year of it, and that was the year when Jeconiah was carried captive, and all the nobles, &c. see 2 Kings xxiv. 13—15. Just at that time when the most fatal stroke was given was a prince born, that in process of time should avenge Jerusalem upon Babylon, and heal the wound that was now given. Thus deep are the counsels of God concerning his people, thus kind are his designs towards them.

CHAP. VI.

Daniel doth not give a continual history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs, for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story, as serve for the confirming of our faith in God, and the encouraging of our obedience to him; for the things written aforetime were written for our learning. It is a very observable, improveable story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel, by faith stopped the mouths of lions, and so obtained a good report, Heb. xi. 33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin, Daniel was cast into the lion's den for not omitting a known duty, and God's miraculous delivering both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages, to be resolute and constant both in their abhorrence of that which is evil, and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have, (1.) Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius, ver. 1—3. (2.) The envy and malice of his enemies against him, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The decree they obtained against prayer for thirty days, ver. 6—9. (4.) Daniel's continuance and constancy in prayer notwithstanding that decree, ver. 10. (5.) Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of lions, ver. 11—17. (6.) His miraculous preservation in the lion's den, and deliverance out of it, ver. 18—23. (7.) The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there, ver. 24. (8.) The decree which Darius made upon this occasion in honour of the God of Daniel, and the prosperity of Daniel afterwards, ver. 25—28. And this God is our God for ever and ever.

1. IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2. And over these three presidents: of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4. ¶ Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

We are here told concerning Daniel,

1. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new modelled the government, he made Daniel prime minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasury, and of the great seal; Darius's dominion was very large, all he got by his conquests and acquisitions was, that he had so

many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, ver. 1. and appointed them their districts in which they were to administer justice, preserve the public peace, and levy the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme, and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Over these princes there was a triumvirate, or three presidents, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of mal-administration, that the king should have no damage, ver. 2. that he should not sustain loss in his revenue, and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage: both as it alienates the affections of his people from him, and provokes the displeasure of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was the chief, because he was found to go beyond them all in all manner of princely qualifications. He was preferred above the presidents and princes, ver. 3. and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management, that he thought to set him over the whole realm, and let him place and displace at his pleasure.

Now, (1.) We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius, that he would prefer a man thus purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason one would think should have been looked upon as an enemy, and as such imprisoned or banished; he was a native of a foreign kingdom and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive: but Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt he had creatures of his own, not a few that expected preferment in this new conquered kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare, that finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand. (2.) We must take notice of it to the glory of God, that though Daniel was now very old, it is above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon, yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind. And that he who had continued faithful to his religion, through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns, in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow; by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliancy to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God he will honour them.

2. What a good man he was. An excellent spirit was in him, ver. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject: and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was no error or fault to be found in him, ver. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or forgetfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust, to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free not only from fault but error; not only from crime but from mistake.

3. What ill-will was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him, because he was advanced above them, and probably hated him, because he had a watchful eye upon them, and took care they should not wrong the government to enrich themselves. See here, (1.) The cause of envy, and that is every thing that is good; Solomon complains of it as a vexation, that for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour, Eccl. iv. 4. that the better a man is, the worse he is thought of by his rivals; Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours. (2.) The effect of envy; and that is every thing that is bad; those that envied Daniel sought no less than his ruin, his disgrace would not serve them, it was his death they desired. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy? Prov. xxvii. 4. Daniel's enemies set spies upon him, to observe him in the management of his place, they sought to find occasion against him, something on which to ground an accusation concerning the kingdom, some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the mole-hill of a mistake, it should have been soon improved to the beam, to the mountain of an unpardonable misdemeanor. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, because of his observers, Psal. cxvii. 11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. Those especially have need to carry their cup even, that have it full. They conclude at length they should not find occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God, ver. 5. It seems then Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering, or shrinking; and yet that was no bar to his preferment; there was no law that required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well: he was at the king's service, usque ad aras, but there he left him. In this manner therefore his enemies hoped to enslave him. Querendum est crimen laesae religionis ubi majestatis deficit. Grotius. Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion carry themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation, that their most watchful spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which they walk according to their consciences. It is observable, that when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left, that they did not suborn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews, and are called Christians.

6. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign

sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. 10. ¶ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him by any law now in being, they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to ensnare him, and in such a manner as they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God that they gained their point. Here is,

1. Darius's impious law. I call it Darius's, because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it had not been of force; but it was not properly his, he contrived it not, and was perfectly wheedled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who perhaps were met at this time upon some public occasion; it is pretended that this bill, which they would have to pass into a law, was the result of mature deliberation; that *all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, had consulted together* about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but *advised it, for divers good causes and considerations*, that they had done what they could to *establish it for a firm decree*; nay, they intimate to the king, that it was *carried nemine contradicente*: *All the presidents* are of this mind, and yet we are sure that Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it; and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it, as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation which is far from being so; and that which few approve of, is sometimes confidently said to be that which *all agree to*. But, O the infelicity of kings, who being under a necessity of seeing and hearing with other people's eyes and ears, are many times wretchedly imposed upon! These designing men, under colour of doing honour to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, that *whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, should be put to death after the most barbarous manner, should be cast into the den of lions*, ver. 7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed, and passed into a law. Now, (1.) There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great, and very kind to his subjects, which they suggest will be of good service to him now he is newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need to apply themselves either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And for thirty days together he will be ready to give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings to be benefactors to their subjects, and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests: but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them which is due to God only, it is their disgrace and not their honour. But, (2.) There is a great deal in it that is *apparently evil*; it is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of *any man*; must not a beggar ask an alms? or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? if the child want bread must he not ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? nay, they that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to introduce them: but it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of *any god*. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God, and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days, is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature sheweth us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs, doth not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God and to seek to him? Doth not every man's heart direct him when he is in want or distress to call upon God, and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God, and can men live thirty days without prayer? Will the king himself be tied up for so long from praying to God, or if it be allowed him, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel would have been as effectually ensnared: but they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a *little god*, was fond of the *feather in his cap*, (for so it was, and not a *flower in his crown*) and signed the writing and the decree, ver. 9. which being once done according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, it was not upon any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

2. Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, ver. 10. He did not retire into the country or abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a fair opportunity of honouring God before men, and shewing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he might have gone to the king and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misinformation, that *all the presidents* had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them had never been consulted about it; but he went to his house, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

1. Daniel's constant practice, which we had not been told but upon this occasion; but we have reason to think it was the general practice of the pious Jews. (1.) He prayed in his house, sometimes himself alone, and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that prayed in his house, Acts x. 30. Note, Every house not only may be but ought to be a house of prayer, where we have a tent God must have an altar, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices. (2.) In every prayer he gave thanks; when we pray to God for the mercies we want, we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. (3.) In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant, and set himself as in his presence. He did this before his God, and with a regard to him. (4.) When he prayed and gave thanks, he kneeled upon his knees, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, whom it concerns to be importunate. (5.) He

opened the windows of his chamber; that the sight of the visible heaven; might affect his heart with an awe of that God who dwells above the heavens but that was not all. he opened them toward Jerusalem, the holy city though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust, Psal. cii. 14. and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his brethren the captives in remembering Jerusalem, and preferring it before his chief joy, Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name, and when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was, that if his people should in the land of their enemies, pray unto him with their eye towards the land which he gave them, and the city he had chosen, and the house that was built to his name, that then he would hear and maintain their cause, 1 Kings viii. 48, 49. to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions. (6.) He did this three times a day, three times every day, according to the example of David, Psal. lv. 17. Morning, evening, and at noon I will pray. It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind but to mind conscience; and if we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think seldom will serve our souls? This is sure as little as may be to answer the command of praying always. (7.) He did this so openly and avowedly, that all that knew him knew it to be his practice; and he thus shewed it, not because he was proud of it: in the place where he was, there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation but reproach that attended it, but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker, and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it, nor though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well doing. Though he was a man of business, vast business for the service of the public, he did not think that would excuse him from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are they who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it, Ezek. xiv. 14. and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer, and making a business of it daily, and in thus doing God blessed him wonderfully.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he knew that the writing was signed, he continued to do as he did aforetime, and altered not one circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed so much the oftener when those days were expired and the danger was over, or he might have performed the duty at another time and in another place, so secretly that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it, and so he might both satisfy his conscience and keep up his communion with God, and yet avoid the law, and continue in his usefulness; but if he had done so, it would have been thought both by his friends and by his enemies, that he had thrown up the duty for this time through cowardice and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God and the discouragement of his friends. Others that moved in a lower sphere might well enough act with caution; but Daniel that has so many eyes upon him, must act with courage: and the rather because he knows the law when it was made was particularly levelled against him. Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, no not so much as seem to come short of it. In trying times, great stress is laid upon our confessing Christ before men, Matt. x. 32. and we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. If we do not think this example of Daniel obligeth us to do likewise, yet I am sure it forbids us to censure those that do, for God owned him in it. By his constancy to his duty, now it appears he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it, for if ever any excuse would have served to put it by, this would have served now. (1.) That it was forbidden by the king his master, and in honour of the king too; but it is an undoubted maxim in answer to that, we are to obey God rather than men. (2.) That it would be the loss of his life; but it is an undoubted maxim in answer to that, that they who throw away their souls, (as those certainly do that live without prayer) to save their lives, make but an ill bargain for themselves, and though herein they make themselves, like the king of Tyre, wiser than Daniel, at their end they will be fools.

11. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12. Then they came near and spake before the king concerning the king's decree: Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not. 13. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day: 14. Then the king when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually he will deliver thee. 17. And a stone was brought, and laid it upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed, concerning Daniel.

Here is, 1. Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary, ver. 11. These men assembled, they came tumultuously together, so the word is, the same that was used, ver. 6. borrowed from Psal. ii. 1. Why do the heathen rage? They came together to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time when they knew

to be his usual hour of devotion, and if they had not found him so engaged, they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness and distrust of his God; but (which they rather wished to do) they found him on his knees praying and making supplication before his God. For his love they are his adversaries, but like his father David, he gives himself unto prayer, Psal. cix. 4.

2. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God, they lost no time, but applied themselves to the king, ver. 12. and having appealed to him whether there was not such a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it, and that it was so ratified as that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, ver. 13. They describe him so in the information they give as to exasperate the king; and incense him the more against him, he is of the children of the captivity of Judah, he is of Judah, that despicable people, and now a captive in a despicable state, that can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet he regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed. Note, It is no new thing for that which is done faithfully, in conscience towards God, to be misrepresented as done obstinately and in contempt of the civil powers, that is, for the best saints to be reproached as the worst men. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and we have reason to think prayed for the king and his government, yet this is construed as not regarding the king. That excellent spirit which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say he makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only he makes his petition, which is the thing the law forbids.

3. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him but in spite to Daniel that they had proposed that law, and now is sore displeased with himself for gratifying them in it, ver. 14. Note, When men indulge a proud vain glorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what vexations they are preparing for themselves; their flatterers may prove their tormentors, and were but spreading a net for their feet. Now the king sets his heart to deliver Daniel, both by argument and by authority he labours till the going down of the sun to deliver him, i. e. to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prosecution. Note, We often do that through inconsideration, which afterwards we see cause a thousand times to wish undone again: which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet, for then all our ways will be established.

4. The violence with which the prosecutors demanded judgment, ver. 15. We are not told what Daniel said; the king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own cause, but silently commits himself and it to him that judges righteously: but the prosecutors insist upon it, that the law must have its course; it is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which is now become the universal monarchy, that no decree or statute which the king established may be changed. The same we find Esth. i. 19.—viii. 8. The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king by giving him a power to make and unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would: The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king by supposing that whatever law he solemnly ratified, it was so well made that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it, as if any human foresight could in framing a law guard against all inconveniences. But if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case (as I am apt to think it is not, but perverted) while it honours the king's legislative power, it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to shew that mercy which upholds the throne, and to pass acts of indemnity, which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a disabling statute, yet never question his power to pardon an offence against a penal statute. But Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes, that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embarrassed with great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

5. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself with the utmost reluctance and against his conscience signs the warrant for his execution: and Daniel, that venerable grave man, that carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his countenance, that had so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council board, and greater upon his knees, that had power with God and man, and had prevailed purely for worshipping his God, is brought as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions, to be devoured by them, ver. 16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion to the gracious sufferer, and the utmost indignation at the malicious prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-crafty man) is persuaded to do it with his own signet, ver. 17. that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus when Christ was buried, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

6. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God, Thy God whom thou serveest continually he will deliver thee, ver. 16. Here, (1.) He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so, even when it was made a crime. (2.) He leaves it to God to free him from punishment, since he could not prevail to do it. He will deliver thee. He is sure his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

18. ¶ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serveest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I have done no hurt. 23. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take

Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. 24. ¶ And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery over them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Here is, 1. The melancholy night which the king had upon Daniel's account, ver. 18. He had said indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger, and justly might God deprive him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace, vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering to the law of God and nature, with a non obstante to the law of the Medes and Persians: he eat no supper, but passed the night fasting; his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forbade the music; nothing more unpleasing than songs sung to a heavy heart. He went to bed but got no sleep; was full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day. Note, The best way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience, then we may lay us down in peace.

2. The solicitous enquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, ver. 19, 20. He was up early, very early, for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him. And he was no sooner up but he went in haste to the den of lions, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant, that would not sufficiently testify his affection to Daniel, nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel, art thou alive? He longs to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey; O Daniel, servant of the living God, has thy God whom thou serveest made it to appear that he is able to deliver thee from the lions? If he rightly understood himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exert his power? what he doubted of we are sure of, that the servants of the living God have a master who is well able to protect them, and bear them out in his service.

3. The joyful news he met with that Daniel is alive, is safe and well, and unhurt in the lions' den, ver. 21, 22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though it was now a lamentable voice, and spoke to him with all the deference and respect that was due to him, O king, live for ever; he doth not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his prosecutors, but to shew that he has heartily forgiven him, he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the diskindnesses they have done us, who we know did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The account Daniel gives the king is very pleasant, it is triumphant.

(1.) God has preserved his life; by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's God, thy God whom thou serveest, to which Daniel doth as it were echo back, yea, he is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for he hath sent his angel, the same bright and glorious being that was seen in the form of the son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace, had visited Daniel, and it is likely in a visible appearance had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions' mouths, that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence made even the lions den his strong hold, his palace, his paradise; he never had had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour, from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keep their souls from sin, comfort their souls with his peace, and receive their souls to himself, he doth in effect stop the lions' mouth that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their fellow servants.

(2.) God has therein pleaded his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government; we do not find he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear his integrity as the light, and he did it effectually by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel in what he had done had not offended either God or the king: before him whom I prayed to, innocency was found in me: He pretends not to a meritorious excellency; but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort; as also that before thee, O king, have I done no hurt, nor designed thee any affront.

4. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied, though they are not, or if it be altered it is by a power superior to that of the Medes and Persians, and therefore no cause can be shewn why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den, ver. 23. The king was exceeding glad to find him alive, and gave orders immediately that they should take him out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and when they searched no manner of hurt was found on him, he was no where crushed or scarred, but was perfectly well, because he believed in his God. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present help.

5. The committing of his prosecutors to the same prison or place of execution rather, ver. 24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage and act like himself; those that would not suffer him to shew mercy to Daniel, now God has done it for him, shall be made to feel his repentments, and he will do justice for God who had shewed mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now his innocency is cleared, and heaven itself is become his compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation made against false accusers, Deut. xix. 18, 19. Such they were to be reckoned now Daniel was proved innocent, for though the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves, however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua, Psal. vii. 15. 16.—ix. 15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is verified, Prov. xi. 18. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. In this execution we may observe (1.) The king's severity, in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes above those of the nations, for God commanded that the children should not die for the father's crimes, Deut. xxiv. 16. Yet it was done in extraordinary cases, as that of

Achan, and Saul, and Haman. (2.) The lions fierceness. They had the mastery of them immediately, and tore them to pieces before they come to the bottom of the den. This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off: so were these lions. And the Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth.

25. ¶ Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26. I make a decree. That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the GOD of Daniel: for he is the living GOD, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lions den, by doing honour to both.

1. He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is the everlasting gospel, preached to them that dwell on the earth, Rev. xiv. 7. Fear God, and give glory to him. Observe, (1.) To whom he sends this decree; to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, ver. 25. These are big words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more but every dominion of his kingdom, which though it contained many nations, yet not all nations; but so it is, those that have much are ready to think they have all. (2.) What the matter of the decree is; That men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. This goes further than Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon the like occasion, for that only restrained people from speaking amiss of this God, but this requires them to fear before him, to keep up and express awful reverent thoughts of him. And well might this decree be prefaced as it is with peace be multiplied unto you, for the only foundation of true and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God; for that is true wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk according to that rule, peace shall be upon us. Peace shall be multiplied to us. But though this decree goes far, it doth not go far enough; had he done right, and come up to his present convictions, he should have commanded all men not only to tremble and fear before this God, but to love him and trust in him, to forsake the service of their idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so deeply rooted, that it was not to be extirpated by the edicts of princes, nor by any power less than that which went along with the glorious gospel of Christ. (3.) What are the causes and considerations moving him to make this decree. They are sufficient to have justified a decree for the total suppression of idolatry, much more will they serve to support this. There is good reason why all men should fear before this God; for (1.) His being is transcendent. He is the living God; lives as a God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things, have not so much as an animal life. (2.) His government is incontestable; he has a kingdom, and a dominion: he not only lives but reigns as an absolute sovereign. (3.) Both his being and his government are unchangeable. He is himself steadfast for ever, and with him is no shadow of turning. And his kingdom too is that which shall not be destroyed by any external force, nor has his dominion any thing in itself that threatens a decay, or tends toward it, and therefore it shall be even to the end. (4.) He has an ability sufficient to support such an authority, ver. 27. He delivereth his faithful servants from trouble, and rescueth them out of trouble; he worketh signs and wonders, quite above the utmost power of nature to effect, both in heaven and on earth, by which it appears that he is sovereign Lord of both. (5.) He has given fresh proof of all this in delivering his servant Daniel from the power of the lions. This miracle, and that of the delivering of the three children, were wrought in the eye of the world, were seen, published, and attested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the errors of Heathenism, and very proper preparations for pure catholic Christianity.

2. He puts honour upon Daniel, ver. 28. So this Daniel prospered. See how God brought to him good out of evil. This bold stroke which his enemies made at his life was a happy occasion of taking them off, and their children too, who otherwise would still have stood in the way of his preferment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to him: and now he prospered more than ever, was more in favour with his prince and reputation with the people: which gave him a great opportunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus out of the eaters (and that was a lion too) came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

CHAP. VII.

The six former chapters of this book were historical, we now enter with fear and trembling upon the six latter, which are prophetic, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively determine the sense of, and yet many things plain and profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a good use of. In this chapter we have, (1.) Daniel's vision of the four beasts, ver. 1. 8. (2.) His vision of God's throne of government and judgment, ver. 9—14. (3.) The interpretation of these visions given him by an angel that stood by, ver. 15—28. Whether those visions look as far forward as the end of time; or whether they were to have a speedy accomplishment is hard to say, nor are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it.

1. IN the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. 2. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of

the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3. And four great beasts came up from the sea, divers one from another. 4. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: and I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was divers from all the beasts that were before it: and it had ten horns. 8. I considered the horns, and behold there came up among them another little horns before whom there were three of the first horn, plucked up by the roots: and, behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

The date of this chapter placeth it before chap. v. which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and chap. vi. which was in the first of Darius, for Daniel had those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing near a period. Belshazzar's name here is in the original spelled differently from what it used to be; before it was Bel-she-azar, Bel is he that treasures up riches. But this is Bel-she-azar, Bel is on fire by the enemy: Bel was the god of the Chaldeans, he had prospered, but it is now to be consumed.

We have in these verses Daniel's vision of the four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews. Observe,

1. The circumstances of this vision: Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and now he is himself honoured with like divine discoveries, ver. 1. He had visions of his head upon his bed, when he was asleep: so God sometimes revealed himself and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them, Job xxxiii. 15. For when we are most retired from the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake he wrote the dream for his own use, lest he should forget it as a dream, which passeth away; and he told the sum of the matters to his brethren the Jews, for their use, and gave it them in writing, that it might be communicated to those at a distance, and preserved for their children after them, who should see these things accomplished. The Jews misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes, that after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquillity: but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God by this prophet lets them know that they shall have tribulation; those promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the external blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both wrote these things, and spake them, to intimate, that the church should be taught both by the scriptures, and by ministers preaching; both by the written word, and by word of mouth, and ministers in their preaching are to tell the sum of the matters that are written.

2. The vision itself, which foretels the revolutions of government in those nations, which the church of the Jews for the following ages was to be under the influence of.

1. He observed the four winds to strive upon the great sea, ver. 2. They strove which should blow strongest, and at length blow alone; This represents the contests among princes for empire, are the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies, he was now to have a prospect of, owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be raised when the four winds strive for mastery: That is it which the kings of the nations are contending for in their wars, which are as noisy and violent as the battle of the winds; but how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terrible are its convulsions, how violent its convulsions, while the winds are at strife, which shall have the sole power of troubling it?

Note, This world is like a stormy tempestuous sea, thanks to the proud ambitious winds that vex it.

2. He saw four great beasts come up from the sea, from the troubled waters in which aspiring minds love to fish. The monarchs and monarchies are represented by beasts, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported: These beasts were divers one from another, ver. 3. of different shape, to note the different genius and complexion of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

1. The first beast was like a lion, ver. 4. This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had eagle's wings, with which to fly upon the prey: It notes the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But he soon sees the wings plucked, a full stop put to the career of their victorious arms: Divers countries that had been tributaries to them revolt from them, and made head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It has lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called Cœur de Lion) hath lost its courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and daring nothing; they are put in fear, and made to know themselves to be but men. Sometimes the valour of a nation strangely sinks, and becomes cowardly and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nation in an age or two becomes the tail.

2. The second beast was like a bear, ver. 5. This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous; This bear raised up itself on one side against the lion, and soon mastered it. It raised up one dominion: So some read it. Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the two arms, in one breast, now set up a joint government. This bear had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth, the remains of those nations it had devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness; and yet an indication, that though it had devoured

much, it could not devour all: there were some ribs still stuck in the teeth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, *Arise, devour much flesh*; let the bones, the ribs alone that cannot be conquered, and let upon that which will be an easier prey. The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them. Note, Conquests unjustly made, are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much worse, that the beasts prey not upon those of their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

3. The third beast was like a leopard, ver. 6. This was the Grecian monarchy founded by Alexander the Great, active, crafty, and cruel, like a leopard: he had four wings of a fowl, the lion seems to have had but two wings; but the leopard has four, for though Nebuchadnezzar made great dispatch in his conquests Alexander made much greater: In six years time he gained the whole empire of Persia, a great part beside of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations: this beast had four heads; upon Alexander's death his conquests were divided among his four chief captains; Seleucus Nicanor had Asia the Great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia the Less; Cassander had Macedonia, and Ptolemy had Egypt. Dominion was given to this beast; it was given of God, from whom alone promotion comes.

4. The fourth beast was more fierce and formidable, and mischievous than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, ver. 7. The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast; some make it to be the Roman empire, which when it was in its glory, comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Pannonia, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns, ver. 8. they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt. Others make this fourth beast to be the kingdom of Syria, the family of the Seleucids, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was divers from those which went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were the great iron teeth with which they devoured and brake in pieces the people of God, and they trampled upon the residue of them. The ten horns are then supposed to be ten kings that reigned successively in Syria; and then the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the kings, and got the government. He was a man of great ingenuity, and therefore is said to have eyes like the eyes of a man; and was very bold and daring, had a mouth speaking great things. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

9. ¶ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened. 11. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12. As concerning the rest of the beasts they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire, or the Roman, or the former as the figure of the latter, it is plain these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God, in reference to the persecutions they were likely to sustain, both from the one and from the other; and from all their proud enemies, in every age; for it is written for their learning, on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope.

Three things are here discovered that are very encouraging.

1. That there is a judgment to come, and God is the judge. Now men have their day, and every pretender thinks he should have his day, and struggles for it. But he that sits in heaven laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Psal. xxxvii. 13. ver. 9. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, not only the thrones of these beasts, but all rule, authority, and power, that is set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men, 1 Cor. xv. 24. such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world, in comparison with God's kingdom, they that see them set up, need but wait a while, and they will see them cast down. I beheld till thrones were set up, so it may as well be read, Christ's throne, and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbins confesseth that these thrones are set up, one for God, another for the son of David. It is the judgment that is here set, ver. 10. Now this is intended, (1.) To speak God's wife and righteous government of the world by his providence: and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men, in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, That the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all, Psal. ciii. 19. That verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth, Psal. lviii. 11. (2.) Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But, (3.) It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment, for though it follow not immediately upon the dominion of the fourth beast; nay, though it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves under their troubles, with the belief and prospect of it; Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied of it, Jude 14. Doth the mouth of the enemy speak great things? ver. 8. Here are far greater things which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision here; especially St. John's vision of it, Rev. xx. 11, 12.

(1.) The judge is the ancient of days himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the ancient of days, because he is God from everlasting to everlasting. Among men we reckon that with the ancient is wisdom, and days shall speak, shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the ancient of days? The glory of the judge is here set forth by his garment, which was white as snow, noting his splendour and purity in all the administrations of his justice; and the hair of his head clean and white, as the pure wool, that as the white and hoary head he may appear venerable.

(2.) The throne is very formidable. It is like the fiery flame, dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the throne being moveable upon wheels, or at least the chariot in which he rode his circuit, the wheels thereof are as burning fire, to devour the adversaries, for our God is a consuming fire, and with him are everlasting burnings, Isa. xxxiii. 14. This is enlarged upon, ver. 10. As to all his faithful friends there proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river of water of life, Rev. xxii. 1. so to all his implacable enemies there issues and comes forth from his throne a fiery stream, a stream of brimstone, Isa. xxx. 33. a fire that shall devour before him, Isa. xxx. 33. He is a swift witness, and his word a word upon the wheels.

(3.) The attendants are numerous and very splendid; the Shechinah is always attended with angels, it is so here, ver. 10. a thousand thousands minister to him; and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him: It is his glory that he has such attendance, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are, there are thousands of angels; and how obsequious they were, they stand before God, ready to go on his errands, and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment; when the Son of man shall come, and all the holy angels with him, Enoch prophesied, that the Lord should come with his holy myriads.

(4.) The process is fair and unexceptionable; the judgment is set; publicly and openly, that all may have recourse to it, and the books are opened; as in courts of judgment, among men, the proceedings are in writing and upon record, which is laid open when the cause comes to a hearing; the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits read to clear the matter of fact, the statute and common law-books consulted to find out what is the law, so in the judgment of the great day the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident, as if there were books opened to justify it.

2. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with and brought down in due time, ver. 11, 12. This is here represented to us,

(1.) In the destroying of the fourth beast. God's quarrel with this beast is because of the voice of the great words, which the horn spake, bidding defiance to heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred; this provokes God more than any thing, for the enemy to behave himself proudly, Deut. xxxii. 27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled because he hath said, Who is the Lord? and hath said, I will pursue, I will overcome. Enoch foretold, that therefore the Lord would come to judge the world, that he might convince all that are ungodly of their hard speeches, Jude 15. Note, Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day. And see what comes of this beast that talks so big, he is slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed, he himself died a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the kingdom wasted by the Parthians and Armenians, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself, (if we take that for the fourth beast) after it began to persecute Christianity declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed, So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and be slain before thee.

(2.) In the diminishing and weakening of the other three beasts, ver. 12. they had their dominion taken away; and so were disabled to do the mischief they had done to the church and people of God, but a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remained in a mean, and weak, and low condition; we may allude to this, in describing the remainders of sin in the hearts of good people; they have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin. But the dominion of them is taken away, so that sin doth not reign in their mortal bodies. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he breaks the teeth of them (Psal. iii. 7.) when he doth not break the neck of them; crusheth the persecution, but reprieves the persecutors, that they may have space to repent. And it is fit that God in doing his own work should take his own time and way.

3. That the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up and kept up in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will set his king upon his holy hill of Zion. Daniel sees this in vision, and comforts himself and his friends with the prospect of it. This is the same with Nebuchadnezzar's foresight of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which broke in pieces the image; but in this vision there is much more of pure gospel than in that.

1. The Messiah is here called the son of man, one like unto the son of man; for he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, was found in fashion as a man. I saw one like unto the son of man, one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the divine counsels of him; that in the fullness of time was to be the mediator between God and man. He is like unto the son of man, but is indeed the Son of God. Our Saviour seems plainly to refer to this vision, when he saith, John v. 27. that the Father has therefore given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man, and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to whom a kingdom and dominion were to be given.

2. He is said to come with the clouds of heaven. Some refer this to his incarnation; he descended in the clouds of heaven, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple in a cloud. The empires of the world were beasts that rose out of the sea, but Christ's kingdom is from above, he is the Lord from heaven. I think it is rather to be referred to his ascension; when he returned to the Father, the eye of his disciples followed him, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Acts i. 9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rid triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he comes with the clouds of heaven.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to enquire (as the sons of the prophets concerning Elijah in a like case) whether it carried him, where it lodged him; and here we are told, abundantly to our satisfaction, that he came to the ancient of days, for he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, John xx. 17. from him he came forth, and to him he returns, to be glorified with him, and to sit down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, Now I go to him that sent me. But was he welcome? yes, no doubt he was, for they brought him near before him; he was introduced into his Father's presence.

presence, with the attendance and adorations of *all the angels of God*, Heb. i. 6. *God caused him to draw near and approach to him* as an advocate and undertaker for us, Jer. xxx. 31. that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach he made to the ancient of days it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near as our high-priest, who for us enters within the veil, and is our fore-runner.

He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, ver. 14. when he went to be glorified with his Father he had a power given him over all flesh, John xvii. 2—5, with the prospect of his Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away, ver. 12. but the church's head and best friend shall have the dominion given him; to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, Phil. ii. 9, 10. To him is given glory and a kingdom, and it is given by him who has an unquestionable right to give it, which some think with an eye to these words, our Saviour teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's prayer, *For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory*. It is here foretold that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be, (1.) An universal kingdom, the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to or aimed at. All people, nations, and languages, shall fear him, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects, or his conquered captives; to be either ruled or over-ruled by him. One way or other the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms. (2.) An everlasting kingdom. His dominion shall not pass away to any successor, much less to any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, or the infernal power and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

15. ¶ I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them: 22. Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment were given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces. 24. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise, and another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time. 26. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Here is, 1. The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God in them put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great alloy of pain and perplexity, ver. 15. *I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body*. The word here used for the body, properly signifies a sheath or scabbard, for the body is no more to the soul; that is the weapon, it is that which we are principally to take care of. The visions of my head troubled me, and again, ver. 28. *my cogitations much troubled me*. The manner in which these things were discovered to him quite overwhelmed him, and put his thoughts so much to the stretch that his spirits failed him, and the trance he was in stured him, and made him faint. The things themselves, that were discovered, amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion, till by degrees he recollected and conquered himself, and set the comfort of the vision over against the terrors of it.

2. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them, ver. 16. *I come near to one of them that stood by, to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth*, i. e. the true intent and meaning of all this. Note, it is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know must ask by faithful and fervent prayer and by accomplishing a diligent search.

3. The key that was given him to let him into the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly that he made him know the interpretation of the thing; and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchs and their monarchs, which shall arise out of the earth, as those beasts

did out of the sea, ver. 17. They are but *Terra filii*, from beneath, favour of the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; and they are of the earth earthly, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return.

2. Daniel pretty well understands the three first beasts, but concerning the fourth he desires to be better informed, because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceeding dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, for it devoured and brake in pieces, ver. 19. Perhaps this was it that put Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, ver. 20. And this he was most inquisitive about, because it was this horn that made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, ver. 21. while no more is intimated, but that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another; the prophet doth not shew himself so much concerned, let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and be dashed in pieces one against another; but when they make war with the saints, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them, and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints?

To this his interpreter answers, ver. 23, 24, 25. That this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall devour the whole earth, or as it may be read, the whole land. That the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very abusive to God and his people, shall carry it, (1.) Very imperiously towards God, he shall speak great words against the most High, setting him and his authority and justice at defiance. (2.) Very imperiously towards the people of God: he shall wear out the saints of the most High; he will not cut them off at once, but wear them out by long oppressions, and a constant course of hardships put upon them; ruining their estates, and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear out the saints of the most High, that they may be no more in remembrance; but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands, God will have a church in it. He shall think to change times and laws, to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring every one to say and do, just as he would have them. He shall trample upon laws and customs human and divine; *Diruit dissoluta mutat quadrata rotundis*, as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring attempts he shall for a time prosper and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time, i. e. for three years and a half; that famous prophetic measure of time we meet with in the Revelation, which is sometimes called forty-two months, sometimes one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which come all to one. But at the end of that time the judgment shall sit and take away his dominion, ver. 26. which he expounds, ver. 11. the beast was slain and his body destroyed. And as Mr. Mede reads, ver. 12. *As to the rest of the beasts*, i. e. the ten horns especially the little rising (horn as he calls it) they had their dominion taken away.

Now the question is, Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, is here foretold? Interpreters are not agreed, some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Seleucidae, and the little horn to be Antiochus, and shew the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees; F. Junius Piscator, Polanus, Broughton, and many others: but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Romans, and the little horn to be Julius Caesar, and the succeeding emperors, saith Calvin. The A. Michrill, the papal kingdom, saith Mr. Joseph Mede, that wicked one, which as this little horn is to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's second coming; and the pope assumes a power to change times and laws, i. e. an absolute despotic power: *potestas dissolutiva*, as he calls it. Others make the little horn to be the Turkish empire, to Luther, Vatabales, and others. Now I cannot prove either side to be in the wrong, and therefore since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillings, and we ought to give scripture its full latitude, in this (as in many other controversies) am willing to allow that they are both in the right; and that this prophecy has primary reference to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews that suffered under Antiochus, that they might see even these melancholy times foretold, but might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and a final overthrow of their proud oppressors, and, which is best of all, might foresee not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world; with the hopes of which, it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses. But yet it was a further reference, and foretells the like persecuting power and rage in Rome heathen, and not in Rome papal, against the Christian religion that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St. John in his visions and prophecies which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference in many particulars to these visions here.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the prevalency of God's kingdom among men, and his victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable, that in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies, this is brought in abruptly, ver. 18. and again, ver. 22. before it comes in the course of the vision to be interpreted, ver. 26, 27. And this also refers, (1.) To the prosperous days of the Jewish church after it had weathered the storm under Antiochus, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies. (2.) To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world by the preaching of his gospel. For judgment Christ comes into this world, to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints kings and priests to their God. (3.) To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne and triumph in the complete downfall of the devil's kingdom.

Let us see what is here foretold, (1.) The ancient of days shall come, ver. 22. God shall judge the world by his Son, to whom he hath committed all judgment; and as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. (2.) The judgment shall sit, ver. 26. God will make it to appear, that he judgeth in the earth, and will both in wisdom and equity, plead his people's righteous cause. At the great day he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. (3.) The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away, ver. 26. All Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end; these words the apostle useth concerning the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii. 8. he shall be consumed with the Spirit of Christ's mouth; and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. (4.) Judgment is given to the saints of the most High. The apostles are here intrusted with the preaching of a gospel by which the world shall be judged: all the saints by their faith and obedience condemn an unbelieving disobedient world; in Christ their head they shall judge the world, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Matt. xix. 28. See what reason we have to honour them that fear the Lord; how mean and despicable soever the saints now appear

appear in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them, they are the *saints of the most High*, they are near and dear to God, and he owes them for his, and judgment is given to them. (5.) That which is most inflicted upon is, that the *saints of the most High* shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, ver. 18. And again, ver. 22. the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And again, ver. 27. the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens shall be given to the people of the *saints of the most High*. Far be it from us to infer from hence, that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any under pretence of faintship to usurp kingship; no, *Christ's kingdom is not of this world*; but this speaks the spiritual dominion of the saints over their own lusts and corruptions, and their victories over Satan and his temptations, and the triumphs of the martyrs over death and its terrors. It likewise prometh that the gospel kingdoms shall be set up, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love, a kingdom of grace, the privileges and comforts of which now, under the heavens, shall be the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory in the heavens: when the empire became Christian, and princes used their power for the defence and advancement of Christianity, then the *saints possessed the kingdom*. The saints rule by the Spirit's ruling in them, and this is the victory overcoming the world, even their faith; and by the making of the kingdoms of this world to become Christ's kingdom. But the full accomplishment of this will be in the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved, which we, according to his promise, look for, that is the *everlasting kingdom*, the crown of glory that fades not away; that is the *everlasting kingdom*; see what an emphasis is laid upon this, ver. 18. the saints shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever: and the reason is, because he whose saints they are is the *most High*, and his kingdom is an *everlasting kingdom*, ver. 27. His is so, and therefore theirs shall be so; because I live, you shall live also, John xiv. 19. His kingdom is theirs; they reckon themselves exalted in his exaltation; and desire no greater honour and satisfaction to themselves, than that all dominions should serve and obey him, as they shall do, ver. 27. They shall either be brought into subjection to his golden scepter, or brought to destruction by his iron rod.

Daniel, in the close, when he ends that matter, tells us what impressions this vision made upon him; it overwhelmed his spirits to that degree, that his countenance was changed, and it made him look pale; but he kept the matter in his heart. Note, the heart must be the treasury and store-house of divine things; there we must hide God's word, as the Virgin Mary kept the sayings of Christ, Luke ii. 51. Daniel kept the matter in his heart with design not to keep it from the church, but to keep it for the church; that what he had received from the Lord, he might fully and faithfully deliver to the people. Note, It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and there to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

CHAP. VIII.

The vision and prophecies of this chapter, look only and entirely at the events that were then shortly to come to pass in the monarchies of Persia and Greece, and seem not to have any farther reference at all. Nothing is here said of the Chaldean monarchy, for that was now just at its period, and therefore this chapter is written not in Chaldee, as the six foregoing chapters were, for the benefit of the Chaldeans, but in Hebrew, and so are the rest of the chapters to the end of the book, for the service of the Jews; that they might know what troubles were before them, and what the issue of them would be, and might provide accordingly. In this chapter we have, (1.) The vision itself of the ram, and the he-goat, and the little horn that should fight and prevail against the people of God, for a certain limited time, ver. 1-14. (2.) The interpretation of this vision, by an angel, shewing, That the ram signified the Persian empire, the he-goat, the Grecian, and the little horn a king of the Grecian monarchy, that should set himself against the Jews and religion, which was Antiochus Epiphanes, ver. 15-27. The Jewish church from its beginning, had been all along more or less blessed with prophets, men divinely inspired, to explain God's mind to them in his providences, and give them some prospect of what was coming upon them; but soon after Ezra's time divine inspiration ceased, and there were no more any prophet till the gospel day dawned. And therefore the events of that time were here foretold by Daniel, and left upon record, that even then God might not leave himself without witnesses, or them without a guide.

IN the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beast might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. 5. And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6. And he came to the ram, that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. 8. Therefore the he goat waxed very great; and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. 9. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, to-

ward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven: and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13. ¶ Then I heard one faint speaking, and another faint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14. And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision, ver. 1. It was in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be in order of time before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprised at the destruction of Babylon now at hand, God gives him a foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter that in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone we should the less admire, and be less affected with the changes in our own day, for that which is done, is that which shall be done, Eccl. i. 9. Then it was that a vision appeared to me, even to me Daniel. Here he solemnly attests the truth of it, it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shewn; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision which appeared to him at the first, in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of, because this vision was an explication and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep, this seems to have been when he was awake.

2. The scene of this vision, the place where that was laid was in Shushan the palace, one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city; it was in the province of Elam, that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was not there in person, for he was now in Babylon a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country, but he was there in vision, as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought in the spirit to the land of Israel. Note, The soul may be at liberty when the body is in captivity; for when we are bound, the spirit of the Lord is not bound. The vision related to that country, and therefore there he was made to fancy himself to be as strongly as if he had really been there.

3. The vision itself, and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, ver. 3. This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdoms of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high, but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former: So the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns, ver. 4. westward, towards Babylon, Syria, Greece, and the lesser Asia; northward, towards the Lydians, Armenians, and Scythians; and southward, towards Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt; for all these nations did the Persian empire one time or other make attempts upon, for the enlarging of their dominion. And at last it became so powerful that no beasts might stand before him. The ram that is of a species of animals that uses to be preyed upon, becomes formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves; so that there was no standing before him, no escaping, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him: The kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, and had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great; he thought himself great, because he did what he would: But to do good, is that which makes men truly great.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat: He was considering the ram and wondering so weak an animal should come to be so prevalent, with expectation what would be the issue; and behold a he-goat came, ver. 5. This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip king of Macedonia; he came from the west, from Greece, which lay west from Persia he fetched a great compass with his army, he came upon the face of the whole earth; he did in effect conquer the world, and then sat down and wept because there was not another world to be conquered. *Unus Pellao juveni non sufficit orbis*. This he-goat, (a creature famed for comeliness in going, Prov. xxx. 31.) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he touched not the ground, so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground, than to go upon the ground; or none touched him in the earth, i. e. he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like an unicorn: he had strength and knew his own strength, he saw himself a match for all his neighbours. Alexander pushed his conquests on so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his vigorous arms. In six years he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn, for his name still lives in history, as one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, ver. 6. Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than thirty thousand foot, and five thousand horse. He ran unto him to surprise him ere he could get intelligence of his motions, in the fury of his power; he came close to the ram. Alexander with his army came up to Darius Codomannus, then emperor of Persia, being moved with choler against him, ver. 7. It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet for want of conduct was an unequal match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him, smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, which three expressions some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela; by which he was at length totally routed; in the last battle he had six hundred thousand men killed, so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire: broke his two horns, the kingdom of Media and Persia, the ram that had destroyed all before him, ver. 4. now is himself destroyed: Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand. Note, Those kingdoms that when they had power abused it, and because none could oppose them withheld not themselves from the doing of any wrong, may expect to have their power at length taken from them, and to be served in their own kind, Isa. xxxiii. 1.

4. He

4. He saw that *he goat* made hereby very considerable, but the great *horn* that had done all the execution *was broken*, ver. 8. Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars, when he was about twenty-six he conquered Darius, and became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength he was broken; not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit; or, as some suspect, by poison; and left no child living behind him, to enjoy that which he had endlessly laboured for, but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly pomp and power, and their insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that instead of that one great horn there came up *four notable ones*, Alexander's four captains, to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much, that when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man; These *four notable horns* were towards the *four winds of heaven*, the same with the *four heads* of the leopard, chap. vii. 6. The kingdoms of Syria, and Egypt, Asia, and Greece, Syria lying to the east, and Greece to the west, Asia minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches, know not who shall gather them, nor whose all those things shall be which they have provided.

6. He saw a *little horn* that became a great persecutor of the church and people of God; and this was the principal thing that was intended to be shewed him in this vision, as afterwards, chap. xi. 30, &c. All agree that this was Antiochus Epiphanes, so he called himself, the *illustrious*, but others called him Antiochus Epimanes, Antiochus the furious. He is called here as before, chap. vii. 8. a *little horn*, because he was in his original contemptible, there were others between him and the kingdom; and he was of a base servile disposition, and had nothing in him of princely qualities; and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, from whence he made his escape, and though the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom: He waxed exceeding great towards the south, for he seized upon Egypt; and towards the east, for he invaded Persia and Armenia: But that which is here especially taken notice of, is the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, for the prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here described, so that it would be easy for those who understood Scripture language, to know who were meant: and the Jews having notice of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children before hand for these suffering trying times.

1. He set himself against the *pleasant land*, i. e. the land of Israel, so called, because it was the *glory of all lands*, for fruitfulness and all the delights of human life; but especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with divine revelations and institutions; it was mount Zion that was *beautiful for situation*, and the *joy of the whole earth*, Psal. xlviii. 2. The pleasantness of that land was, that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the *consolation* and the *glory* of his people Israel. Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place which is a holy place, in which God dwells, and where we may have an opportunity of communing with him. Surely it is good to be here.

2. He fought against the *host of heaven*, i. e. the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church-militant here on earth. The saints being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God by his grace in some measure, as the angels of heaven do it, may be well called a *heavenly host*. Or the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there *warred a good warfare*, were this *host of heaven*. These Antiochus set himself against, he waxed great to the *host of heaven*, in opposition to them, and in defiance of them.

3. He cast down some of the *host*, that is, of the *stars* (for they are called the *host of heaven*) to the ground and stamped upon them. Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries or put them to death; he got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazer and the *seven brethren*, whom he put to death with cruel tortures, because they would not eat swine's flesh, 2 Mac. vi. 7. He gloried in it, that herein he insulted heaven itself, and exalted his throne above the stars of God, Isa. xiv. 13.

4. He magnified himself even to the prime of the *host*: He set himself against the high priest, Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity: or rather against God himself; who was Israel's king of old; who reigns for ever as Zion's king; who himself heads his own hosts that fight his battles: Against him Antiochus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, *Who is the Lord?* Note, Those who persecute the people of God, persecute God himself.

5. He took away the *daily sacrifice*; the morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered every day upon his altar to his honour, Antiochus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt, he took away all other sacrifices, but the *daily sacrifice* only is mentioned, because that was the greatest loss of all other, for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional; God's people reckon their *daily sacrifices*, their morning and evening exercises of devotion, the most needful of their daily business, and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

6. He cast down the place of his sanctuary. He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and set up his image in it. He also cast down the truth to the ground, trampled upon the book of the law, that word of truth, tore it and burnt it, and did what he could to have destroyed it quite, that it might have been lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince: In these he prospered. And would you think it? In these he prospered: He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to have extirpated that holy religion which God's right hand had planted.

But lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein had prevailed against God himself and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained, and set in a true light. (1.) He could not have done this, if God had not permitted him to do it; could have had no power against Israel, unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand and gave him an *host* against the *daily sacrifice*: God's providence put that sword into his hand by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the enterprises, and all the successes of the church's enemies against the church: They are but the rod in God's hand. (2.) God would not have permitted it, if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel to correct them for that, that Antiochus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, when the pleasant land and all its pleasant things are laid waste, it must be acknowledged that sin is the procuring cause of all the desolation. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?* Isa. xlii. 23. The great transgression of the Jews after the captivity (when they were cured of idolatry) was a contempt and profanation of the holy things; snuffing at the service of God,

bringing the torn and the lame for sacrifice, as if the table of the Lord were a contemptible thing, so we find, Mal. i. 7, 8, &c. And that the priests were guilty of this, Mal. ii. 1—8, and therefore God sent *Antiochus to take away the daily sacrifice, and cast down the place of his sanctuary*. Note, it is just with God to deprive those of the privileges of his house, that despise and profane them: and to make them know the worth of ordinances by the want of them, that would not know it by the enjoyment of them.

Lastly, He heard the time of his calamity limited and determined; not the time when it should come, that is not here fixed, because God would have his people always prepared for it, but how long it should last, that when they have no more any prophets to tell them how long. (Psal. lxxix. 9. which psalm seems to have been calculated for this dark and doleful day) they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time. Now concerning this, we have here,

1. The question asked concerning it, ver. 13. Observe, (1.) By whom the question was put. *I heard one saint speaking* to this purpose; and then another saint seconded him, O that we knew how long this trouble would last! The angels here are called *saints*, for they are *holy ones*. chap. iv. 13. the *holy myriads*, Jude 14. The angels concern themselves in the affairs of the church, and enquire concerning them; if as here concerning its temporal salvations, much more do they desire to look into the great salvation, 1 Pet. i. 12. One saint spoke of the thing; and another enquired concerning it: Thus John, that lay in Christ's bosom, was beckoned to by Peter to ask Christ a question, John xiii. 23, 24. (2.) To whom the question was put. He said unto *Palmoni* that spoke. Some make this *certain saint* to be a superior angel that understood more than the rest, to whom therefore they came with their enquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown One; *Palmoni* seems to be compounded of *Peloni Almoni*, which is used, Ruth iv. 1. for *ho, such a one*, and 2 Kings vi. 8. for *such a place*. Christ was yet the nameless One; *Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is a secret?* Judg. xiii. 18. He is the number of secrets, as some translate it, for from him there is nothing hid. The wonderful numberer, so others. His name is called *Wonderful*. Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply ourselves to Jesus Christ, who lay in the Bosom of the Father, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not hid from us, but hid for us. (3.) The question itself that was asked. *How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice?* i. e. How long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? How long shall the transgression of desolation, i. e. the image of Jupiter, that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall the sanctuary and the host the holy place, and the holy persons that minister in it, be troubled under foot by the oppressor? Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the church on earth, and desirous to see an end of its desolations. The angel asked, for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know how long these calamities should last? The question takes it for granted, that they should not last always; the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, though it may come upon them for a while, Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, *The things concerning me have an end*, Luke xxii. 37. and so may the church in hers. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly.

2. The answer given to this question, ver. 14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake the question was asked; he said unto me. God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the enquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now Christ assures him, (1.) That the trouble shall end: it shall continue two thousand and three hundred days and no longer. So many evenings and mornings, so the word is, so many *νύκτες*, so many natural days, reckoned as in the beginning of Genesis by the evenings and mornings; because it was the evening and the morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of, and thought the time passed very slowly while they waited them. Some make the morning and the evening in the number to stand for two; and then two thousand three hundred evenings and as many mornings, will make but one thousand one hundred and fifty days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted: and this comes nearer to the computation, chap. vii. 26. of a time, times, and the dividing of a time. But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days; two thousand three hundred days make six years and three months, and about eighteen days; and just so long they reckon from the defection of the people procured by Menelaus the high-priest in the hundred and forty-second year of the kingdom of Seleucidæ, the sixth month of that year, and the sixth day of the month, so Josephus dates it to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the re-establishment of religion among them, which was in the hundred and forty-eighth year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fifth day of the month, 1 Macc. i. 54. God reckons the time of his people's affliction by days, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted; Rev. ii. 10. thou shalt have tribulation ten days. (2.) He assures him that they should see better days after, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to any people; when they begin to be reformed they will soon be relieved. Though the righteous God may for the correction of his people suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for a while, yet the jealous God will for his own glory see to the cleansing of it in due time. Christ died to cleanse his church, and he will to cleanse it as at length to present it *blameless* to himself.

15. ¶ And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. 18. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground; but he touched me and set me upright. 19. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be. 20. The rams which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes, is the first

king. 22. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up, out of the nation, but not in his power. 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes: but he shall be broken without hand. 26. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. 27. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterwards I rose up and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision but none understood it.

Here is, 1. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him, *ver. 15. I sought the meaning.* Note, Those that rightly know the things of God, cannot but desire to know more and more of them, and to be led further into the mystery of them. And those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God must seek it, and seek it diligently; *seek and ye shall find.* Daniel considered the thing, compared it with former discoveries to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer, as he had done, *chap. ii. 18.* and he did not seek in vain.

2. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision. One, *in the appearance of a man*, who some think was Christ himself, but who but he could command angels? He orders Gabriel to *make Daniel understand this vision.* Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the ministrations of angels, not only to protect his children, but to instruct them; to serve the kind intentions not only of his providence but of his grace.

3. The consternation that Daniel was in upon the approach of his instructor, *ver. 17. when he came near, I was afraid.* Though Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He *fell upon his face*, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he *fell into a deep sleep*, *ver. 18.* which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifference towards it, but was an effect of his faintness, and the oppression of spirit he was under through the abundance of revelations. The disciples in the garden *slept for sorrow*; and as there, so here the *spirit was willing*, but the *flesh was weak*. Daniel would have kept awake and could not.

4. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision. (1.) He *touch'd him and set him upon his feet*, *ver. 18.* Thus when John in a like case was in a like consternation, Christ *laid his right hand upon him*, *Rev. i. 17.* It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to shew that he came not to hurt him, not to *plead against him with his great power*, or with a hand *heavy upon him*, but to help him, to *put strength into him*, *Job xxxiii. 6.* Which God can do with a touch. When we are slumbering and grovelling on this earth, we are very unfit to hear from God, and to converse with him. But if God design instruction for us, he will by his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and *set us upright*. (2.) He promised to inform him. *Understand O son of man*, *ver. 17. i. e.* thou shalt understand if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand. He calls him *son of man*, to intimate that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity as a man. Or thus he preaches humility to him; though he be admitted to converse with angels he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a *son of man*. Or perhaps this title puts an honour upon him: the Messiah was lately called the *son of man*, *chap. vii. 13.* and Daniel is a-kin to him and a figure of him as a prophet, and one *greatly beloved*. He assures him that he shall be made to know *what shall be in the last end of the indignation*, *ver. 19.* Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous-times, that there shall be an end of them, *the indignation shall cease*, *Isa. x. 25.* it *shall be over-past*, *Isa. xxvi. 20.* It may intermit and return again, but the *last end* shall be glorious, good will follow it, nay, and good will be brought out of it. He tells them, *ver. 17. At the time of the end shall be the vision*, i. e. when the *last end* of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is completed, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision. Or at the time of the end of the Jewish church, and in the latter days of it, *shall this vision* be accomplished three or four hundred years hence: understand it therefore that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come. But if he ask more particularly when is the time of the end? And how long to it; Let this answer suffice, *ver. 19. at the time appointed the end shall be*; it is fixed in the divine counsel, which cannot be altered, and which must not be *pryed into*.

5. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, *ver. 20, 21, 22.* The *ram* signified the succession of the kings of Media and Persia: the *rough goat* signified the kings of Greece; the *great horn* was Alexander, the *four horns* that rose in his room were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantoned, of which before, *ver. 8.* They are said to *stand up out of the nations*, but not in his power; none of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddas, who was then high-priest (who is named *Neb. xii. 11*) fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice, for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream, that upon Alexander's approach he should throw open the gates of the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white. Alexander seeing this company at a distance went himself alone to the high priest, and having prostrated himself before that God, whose name was engraven in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and being asked by one of his own captains why he did so, he said, that while he was yet in Macedonia musing on the conquest of Asia, there appeared to him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it. The priest led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel as they had directed him: and there-

they shewed him this book of the prophet Daniel, that it was therefore told, that a Grecian should come and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Darius. Hereupon he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to those of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching; and in honour of him, all the priests that had sons born that year called them Alexander, *Joseph. lib. 11.*

2. Concerning Antiochus, and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the *latter times* of the kingdom of the Greeks, *when the transgressors are come to the full*, *ver. 23. i. e.* when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, so that God cannot in honour bear with them any longer, then shall *stand up* this king to be *flagellum Dei*, the rod in God's hand for the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

1. His character. He shall be a *king of fierce countenance*, insolent and furious, neither fearing God nor regarding man; *understanding dark sentences*, or rather, *versed in dark practices*, the *hidden things of dishonesty*; he was master of all the arts of dissimulation and deceit, and knew the *depth of Satan* as well as any man. He was *wise to do evil*.

2. His success: he shall make dreadful havock of the nations about him; *his power shall be mighty*, bear down all before it, but not by his own power, *ver. 24.* but partly by the assistance of his allies, Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the divine permission; it was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he *destroyed wonderfully*, and thought he made himself a great man by being a great destroyer. He *destroys wonderfully* indeed, for he destroys, (1.) *The mighty people*, and they cannot resist him by their power. The princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he *practiseth* against them and *prospereth*. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those at length that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, be it never so great, unless he could be sure that there were none stronger than he. (2.) He destroys the *holy people* or the *people of the holy ones*, and their sacred character doth neither deter him from destroying them, nor defend them from being destroyed. *All things come alike to all*, and there is *one event to the mighty* and to the *holy* in this world.

3. The methods by which he will gain this success; not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but his *policy and craft*, *ver. 25.* by fraud and deceit, and serpentine subtilty; he shall *cause craft to prosper*; so cunning shall he carry on his projects, that he shall gain his point by the art of wheedling. *By peace he shall destroy many*; as others do by war. Under the umbrage of treaties, leagues, and alliances with them he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into subjection to him. Thus sometimes what a nation truly *brave* has gained in a *righteous war*, a nation truly *base* has regained in a *treacherous peace*, and *craft* has been *caused to prosper*.

4. The mischief that he shall do to religion. He *shall magnify himself in his heart*, and think himself fit to prescribe and give law to every body, so that he shall *stand up against the Prince of princes*, i. e. against God himself; he will profane his temple and altar, prohibit his worship, and persecute his worshippers. See what a height of impudence some men's impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself, though he is the King of kings.

5. The ruin that he shall be brought to at last. He *shall be broken without hand*, i. e. without the hand of man, he shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated as tyrants commonly were; but he shall fall into the hands of the living God, and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews, that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a *common burning place*; and determined to march thither immediately: but no sooner had he spoken these proud words, but he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels, worms bred so fast in his body, that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him, his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long; at first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews, but at length despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews, and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem; then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, *It is meet to submit to God, and for man which is mortal not to set himself in competition with God*; and so died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata near Babylon. So Usher's Annals, *A. M. 1340*, about one hundred and sixty years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed, *ver. 26.* That *vision of the evening and morning is true*, in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explication. How unlikely soever it might be that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of this vision, and here,

1. The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present. *Shut thou up the vision*; let it not be publicly known among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians who were now shortly to possess the kingdom, should be incensed against the Jews by it, because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unreasonable now the edict for their release was expected from the king of Persia. *Shut it up, for it shall be for many days*; it was about three hundred years from the time of this vision to the time of the accomplishment of it, therefore he must *shut it up*, for the present, even from the people of the Jews, lest it should amaze and perplex them, but let it be kept safe for the generations to come, that should live about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible and most serviceable. Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully *laid up*, that hereafter when there is occasion, it may be faithfully *laid out*: and what we have not now any use for, yet we may have another time: divine truths should be sealed up among our treasures, that we may *find them again after many days*.

2. The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge, *ver. 27.* He *fainted and was sick*, with the multitude of his thoughts within him occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that *his belly was as wine which has no vent*, he was *ready to burst like new bottles*. *Job xxxii. 19.* However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in; so that those he conversed with could not perceive it, but he *did the king's business* according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have something to do in it; and those whom God has most dignified with his favours, yet must not think themselves *above their business*. Nor must the pleasure of communion

communion with God take us off from the duties of our particular callings, but still we must in them abide with God. Those especially that are intrusted with public business, must see to it that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews who were in captivity; in which he confesseth sin, acknowledgeth the justice of God in their calamities, but pleads God's promises of mercy which he had yet in store for them, ver. 1—19. (2.) An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer; in which, (1.) He is assured of the discharge of the Jews out of their captivity presently, ver. 20—23, and is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of which that was a type, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished, ver. 24—27. And it is the clearest, brightest prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament.

1. **I**N the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2. In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And I set my face unto the Lord GOD, to seek my prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes.

We left Daniel in the close of the foregoing chapter employed in the king's business, but here we have him employed in better business than any the king had for him, speaking to God, and hearing from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Messiah. Observe,

1. When it was that Daniel had this communion with God, ver. 1. In the first year of Darius the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year, the seventy years of the Jews' captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been ready in that year, and probably before he was cast into the lions den. And one powerful inducement perhaps it was to him then to stick so to the duty of prayer, though it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefits and comfort of it.

2. What occasioned his address to God by prayer, ver. 2. He understood by books, that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of the desolation of Jerusalem, ver. 2. The book by which he understood this was the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold, Jer. xxix. 10. After seventy years he accomplished in Babylon, (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, chap. i. 1.) I will visit you and perform my good word towards you. It was likewise said, Jer. xxv. 3. This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation, (Chorban) the same word that Daniel here useth for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shews he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

3. How serious and solemn his address to God was, when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring (for it appears by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity) then he set his face to seek God by prayer. ¶ Note, God's promises are intended not to supersede but to excite and encourage our prayers; and when we see the day of the performance of them approaching we should the more earnestly plead them with God, and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to heaven on Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel, that though Daniel among others stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment. Ezek. xiv. 14. yet he hopes now the warfare is accomplished, (Isa. xl. 2.) his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns it is time for God's praying people to beseech themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them, besides their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel fought by prayer and supplications; for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended; or rather that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance, now the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe, (1.) The intenseness of his mind in this prayer. I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek him; which notes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervour of his devout affections in the duty. We must in prayer set God before us, and set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must direct our prayers, and must look up. Probably in token of his setting his face towards God he did as usual set his face towards Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it. (2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer; in token of his deep humiliation before God for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and the sense he had of his unworthiness, when he prayed he fasted, put on sackcloth and lay in ashes, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

4. And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O LORD, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; 6. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the

land. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him: 10. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he hath set before us by his servants the prophets. 11. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand thy truth. 14. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15. And now, O LORD our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16. ¶ O LORD, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city; and thy people are called by thy name.

We have here Daniel's prayer to God as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer; I prayed and made my confession. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of (which we commonly call confession) but of our faith in God, and dependence upon him; our sorrow for sin, and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, must be the language of our own convictions; and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think he offered up much larger than is here recorded: and that these are only the heads of it.

1. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God. In which he gives glory to God, (1.) As a God to be feared: and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of; O Lord, the great and dreadful God, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies. (2.) As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon, and put a confidence in; keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and as a proof of their love to him keep his commandments. If we do our part of the bargain, he will not fail to do his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps covenant with them, and not one iota of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them, something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's mercy, now he was to lay before him the miseries of his people; and upon God's covenant now he was to sue for the performance of a promise. Note, We should in prayer look both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

2. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been groaning under, ver. 5, 6, when we seek to God for national mercies, we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins; these are the sins Daniel here laments: and it is observable what variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations; for it becomes penitents to lay loads upon themselves: we have sinned in many particular instances, nay we have committed iniquity, we have driven a trade of sin, we have done wickedly with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have rebelled, have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins,

(1.) That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses; we have departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments, and have not conformed to them. And ver. 10. we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord God. That which speaks of the nature of sin, that it is the transgression of the law, doth sufficiently speak the malignity of it; if sin be made to appear sin, it cannot be made to appear worse; its sinfulness is its greatest hatefulness, Rom. vii. 13. God has set his laws before us plainly and fully as the copy we should write after, yet we have not walked in them, but turned aside or turned back.

(2.) That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, rising up betimes and sending them, ver. 8. We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who have put us in mind of thy laws, and of the functions of them; though they spake in thy name, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with an universal respect to all orders and degrees

degrees of men, to our kings and princes, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to our fathers, and to all the people of the land, whom they had the condescension and compassion to speak to; yet we have not hearkened to them, nor heard them, or not heeded them, nor not complied with them; *mocking God's messengers, and despising his words*, was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. *All Israel have transgressed thy law*, ver. 11. It is Israel, God's professing people, that have known better, and from whom better is expected; Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he has surrounded with his favours; not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people, that *has transgressed by departing and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey thy voice*. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves, ver. 14. *we obeyed not his voice*, and ver. 15, *we have sinned, we have done wickedly*. Those that would find mercy must thus confess their sins.

3. Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them: and it is evermore the way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judgeth, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

(1.) He acknowledgeth that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is *dispersed through all the countries* about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed; God's hand has *driven them* hither and thither, some near where they are known, and therefore the more ashamed; others *afar off*, where they are not known, and therefore the more abandoned, and it is *because of their trespasses, that they have trespassed*, ver. 7. they mingled themselves with the nations, that they might be *despised* by them, and now God mingles them with the nations that they might be *stripped* by them.

(2.) He owns the righteousness of God in it; that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved, ver. 7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee*, we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments; for, ver. 14, *The Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth*, even in these sore calamities we are now under, for, *we obeyed not the words of his mouth*, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand. This seems to be borrowed from Lam. i. 18.

(3.) He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them; *in very faithfulness he afflicted them*; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. *The curse is poured upon us and the oath*, i. e. the curse that was ratified by an oath, in the law of Moses, ver. 11. This further justifies God in their troubles, that he did but inflict the penalty of the law, and which he had given them fair notice of. It was necessary for the preserving of the honour of God's veracity, and saving his government from contempt, that the threatenings of his word should be accomplished, otherwise they look but as huggens, nay, they seem not at all frightful. Therefore *he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us*, because we broke his laws, and *against our judge that judged us*, because they did not according to the duty of their place punish the breach of God's laws: he told them many a time, that if they did not execute justice, as terrors to evil-workers, he must and would take the into work his own hands: and now has confirmed what he said, *by bringing upon us a great evil*, in which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our profiting by the judgments of God's hand, to observe how exactly they agree with the judgments of his mouth.

(4.) He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by *despising* it. It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special mark of divine displeasure; for *under the whole heaven has not been done, as hath been upon Jerusalem*, ver. 12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation in the name of the church, *Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow? which must suppose another like question, Was ever sin like unto my sin?*

(5.) He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest, and if they will say *amen* to his prayer, as it was fit they should if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust, *to us belongs confusion of faces as at this day*, ver. 7. we lie under the shame of the punishment at this day, and we ought to accommodate ourselves to it, and to accept of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due. If Israel had retained their character, and continued a holy people, they had been *high above all nations, in praise, and name, and honour*, Deut. xxvi. 19. But now they have *sinned and done wickedly*, confusion and disgrace belongs to them, to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the inhabitants both of the country and the city; for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to all Israel, both to the two tribes that are near by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes that are afar off in the land of Assyria. Confusion belongs not only to the common people of our land, but to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, ver. 8. who should have set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice and profaneness.

(6.) He imputes the continuance of the judgment to their incorrigibleness under it, ver. 13, 14. *All this evil is come upon us*, and has lain long upon us, *yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God*, not in a right manner, as we should have made it; *with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart*; we have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us; *we have not intreated the face of the Lord our God*, so the word is; we have taken no care to make our peace with God and reconcile ourselves to him: Daniel set his brethren a good example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example: in their affliction it was expected they would *seek God early*, but they sought him not; that they might *turn from their iniquities*, and *understand his truth*. The errand upon which afflictions are sent, is to bring men to *turn from their iniquities*, and to *understand God's truth*; so Elihu had explained them, Job xxxvi. 10. God by them *opens men's ears to discipline*, and *commandeth that they return from iniquity*. And if men were brought rightly to *understand the truth*, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step towards this is, to *make our prayer before the Lord our God*, that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God to make it answer the end. Those that in their affliction *make not their prayer to God*, and *cry not when he bindeth them*, are not likely to *turn from iniquity*, or to *understand his truth*. Therefore because we have not improved the affliction, *the Lord hath watched upon the evil*, as the judge takes care that execution be done according to the sentence; because we have not been melted, he hath kept us still in the furnace, and watcheth over it, to make the heat yet more intense; for when God judgeth he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

4. Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of his favour to Israel, and the concern of his glory in their interests.

1. It is some comfort to them, (and not a little) that God has been always ready to pardon sin, ver. 9. *To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses*; this refers to that proclamation of his name, Exod. xxxiv. 8. *The Lord God, gracious and merciful forgiving iniquity*. Note, It is very encouraging to poor sinners that *mercies belong to God*, as it is convincing and humbling to them that righteousness belongs to him; and they who give him the glory of his righteousness may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, Psalm lxxii. 12. There are abundant mercies in God, and not only forgivenesses but forgivenesses; he is a *God of pardons*, Neh. ix. 7. he *multiplies to pardon*, Isa. lv. 7. *Though we have rebelled against him*, yet with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellious.

2. It is likewise a support to them to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the encouragement of his faith, ver. 15. *Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand*, and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then *formed* into a people? And shall they not now be *reformed* and *new-formed*? Are they now sinful and unworthy? And were they not so then? Are their oppressors now *mighty and haughty*? And were they not so then? And hath not God said, that their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine even that out of Egypt? Jer. xvi. 14. *The force of this plea lies in that, thou hast gotten thee a renown, hast made thee a name*, so the word is, *as at this day*, i. e. even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt, and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown by that deliverance we have so often commemorated, and wilt thou not now get thee a renown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for?

5. Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which redounded very much to the dishonour of God, and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by bringing them out of Egypt.

1. God's holy people were *despised by their sins and the iniquities of their fathers*, they had profaned their crown and made themselves despicable, and then though they are in name and profession God's people, and upon that account truly great and honourable, yet they are become a *reproach to all that are around about them*. Their neighbours laugh them to scorn, and triumph in their disgrace. Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them, and have more honour to lose than other people.

2. God's holy place was *desolate*, Jerusalem the holy city was a reproach, ver. 16. when it lay in ruins it was an *astonishment* and a *hissing* to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house was *desolate*, ver. 17. The altars demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

6. Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. The petition is *very pressing*, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him, *O Lord, I beseech thee*, ver. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer, *now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication*, ver. 17. and grant an answer of peace to it. Now what are his petitions? what are his requests?

(1.) That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing; *O let thine anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain*, ver. 16. He doth not pray for the turning again of their captivity, let the Lord do with them as seemeth good in his eyes; but they pray first for the *turning away of God's wrath*: Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

(2.) That he would lift up the light of his countenance upon them, ver. 17. *cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate*, i. e. return in mercy to us, and shew that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well. Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary, is all in all towards the repair of it, and upon that foundation it must be rebuilt. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles; *cause thy face to shine*, and then *we shall be saved*, Plal. lxxx. 3.

(3.) That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance, ver. 19. *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive*. That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it be removed; *O Lord hearken and do*. Not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; do that for us which none else can; and that speedily, *defer not, O my God*. Now he sees the appointed day approaching, he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them and not defer. David often prays, *make haste, O God, to help me*.

7. Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions; God gives us leave not only to pray but to plead with him; which is not to move him, he himself knows what he will do; but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith.

1. They disdain a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse, ver. 18. *we do not present our supplications before thee*, with hope to speed; for our righteousnesses, as if we were worthy to receive thy favour for any good in us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, though we were more righteous than we are; nay, though we knew nothing amiss by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor would we answer, but he would make supplication to our judge. Moses had told Israel long before, that whatever God did for them it was not for their righteousness, Deut. iv. 4, 5. And Ezekiel had of late told them, that their return out of Babylon would be not for their sakes, Ezek. xxxvi. 22—32. Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy, we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in our own righteousness.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only; as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy; and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him.

1. Do it for thine own sake, ver. 19. for the accomplishment of thine own counsel, the performance of thine own promise, and the manifestation of thine own glory. Note, God will do his own work not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

2. Do it for the Lord's sake, i. e. for the Lord Christ's sake; for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord; so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it. For the sake of Adonai, so David called the Messiah, Psal. cx. 1. and mercy is prayed for the church, for the sake of the Son of man, Psal. lxxx. 17. and for thy word's sake, 2 Sam. vii. 21. Note, Christ is the Lord, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causeth his face to shine upon sinners when they repent and turn to him; because of the satisfaction he has made: In all our prayers, that therefore must be our plea, we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. *Look upon the face of the anointed*. He has himself directed us to ask in his name.

3. Do it according to all thy righteousness, ver. 16. i. e. plead for us against

against our persecutors and oppressors, according to thy righteousness. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of. Or rather by the righteousness of God here is meant his faithfulness to his promise, God had according to his righteousness executed the threatenings, ver. 11. Now, Lord, wilt thou not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promises, as thou hast been to thy threatenings, and accomplish them also?

4. Do it for thy great mercies, ver. 18. to make it appear that thou art a merciful God. The good things we ask of God we call mercies because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion; open thine eyes and behold our desolation, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a piteous case. Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God, and then left with him.

5. Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to them. The sanctuary that is desolate is thy sanctuary, ver. 47. dedicated to thine honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence. Jerusalem is thy city and thy holy mountain, ver. 10. It is the city which is called by thy name, ver. 18. it was the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there: The people that are become a reproach, are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them, ver. 19. they are called by thy name, ver. 19. Lord, thou hast a propriety in them, and therefore art interested in their interests, wilt thou not provide for thine own, for those of thine own house? They are thine, save them, Psalm cxix. 94.

20. ¶ And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my GOD for the holy mountain of my God; 21. Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one; as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel grace that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning-star, this was the day-break, to the son of righteousness; the day spring from on high.

Here is, 1. The time when this answer was given,

(1.) It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed and laid a mighty emphasis upon, *While I was speaking*, ver. 20. yea, *while I was speaking in prayer*, ver. 21. before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet more which he intended to say. He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet farther to enlarge upon. (1.) He was confessing sin, and lamenting that; both my sin, and the sin of my people Israel. Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God, and is ready to confess it: For there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sins not; nor that sins and repents not; St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves, if they say they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins, 1 John i. 8. Good men find it an ease to their conscience to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for others sins as well as for their own. (2.) He was making supplication before the Lord his God, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for the holy mountain of his God, mount Zion. The desolations of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up of the public worship of the God of Israel again, was what he had in view in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than the re-establishment of their civil interests. Now while Daniel was thus employed, (1.) He had a grant made him of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer, and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken, Isa. lxxv. 24. *while they are yet speaking I will hear*. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, ver. 18, 19. And while he was speaking with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is well pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angels, but if we pray with fervency for that which God hath promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer: for he is faithful that has promised.

Vol. II. No. CXLII.*

(2.) He had a discovery made him of a far greater and more glorious redemption, which God would work out for his church in the latter days. Note, Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace must be much in prayer.

(2.) It was about the time of the evening oblation, ver. 21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it; and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of their hands, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening sacrifice, Psalm cxli. 2. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed for the Lord's sake; and for the sake of that this glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him; the Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

2. The messenger by whom this message was sent. It was not given him in a dream, or by a voice from heaven, but for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

1. Who this angel, or messenger was; it was the man Gabriel; if Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other but Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in scripture; Gabriel signifies, the mighty one of God: for the angels are great in power and might, 2 Pet. ii. 11. It was he whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning: Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it, Dan. viii. 18. and though then he trembled at his reproach, yet he observed him so carefully that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning, and being somewhat better acquainted with him, was not now so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to Zacharias, *I am Gabriel*, Luke i. 19. he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice, which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming, when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith in the notice he was then about to give of it as at the door.

2. The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom Daniel prayed, ver. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the word, the commandment, came forth from God. Notice was given to the angels in heaven of this counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into; and orders given to Gabriel to go immediately and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears, it was not any thing Daniel said that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious solemn address to the duty, and in token of that sent him this gracious message. Or perhaps it was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications that Cyrus's word or commandment went forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, that going forth spoken of, ver. 25. The thing is done this very day; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews is signed this morning, just then when thou wast praying for it; and now at the close of this fast-day, Daniel has notice of it; as at the close of the day of atonement, the jubilee trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

3. The haste he made to deliver his message. He was caused to fly swiftly, ver. 21. Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delay not to execute the orders they receive; they run and return like a flash of lightning, Ezek. i. 14. But it should seem sometimes they are more expeditious than at other times, and make a quicker dispatch; as here, the angel was caused to fly swiftly, i. e. he was ordered, and he was enabled to fly swiftly; angels do their work in obedience to divine command, and in dependance upon divine strength. Though they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower as God directs: and though they excel in power, they fly but as God causeth them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are his ministers, and do his pleasure, Psalm ciii. 21.

(4.) The prefaces or introductions to his message.

(1.) He touched him, ver. 21. as before, chap. viii. 18. not to awaken him out of sleep as then, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer, and attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God, we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed we must look up, must look after our prayers, must set ourselves upon our watch-towers.

(2.) He talked with him, ver. 22. talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, that his terror might not make him afraid. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him. *I am come to shew thee*, ver. 23. to tell thee that which thou didst not know before; he had shewed him the troubles of the church under Antiochus, and the period of those troubles, chap. viii. 19. but now he has greater things to shew him; for he that is faithful in a little shall be trusted with more. Nay, *I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding*, ver. 22. not only to shew thee these things, but to make thee understand them.

(3.) He assures him he was a favourite of heaven, else he had not had this intelligence sent him; and he must take it for a favour. *I am come to shew thee, for thou art greatly beloved*. Thou art a man of great desires; acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for. Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest greatly beloved; Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom; and that beloved disciple was he that was intrusted with the prophetic visions of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man, than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the friend of God, and therefore shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? Gen. xviii. 17. Those may reckon themselves greatly beloved of God to whom and in whom he reveals his Son. Some observe, that the title which this angel Gabriel gives to the Virgin Mary, was much the same with this he here gives to Daniel, as if he delighted to put her in mind of it. *Thou that art highly favoured*; as Daniel, greatly beloved.

(4.) He demands his serious attention to the discovery he was now about to make him; therefore understand the matter and consider the visions, ver. 23. This intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God must consider them; must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is for want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

3. The message itself; delivered with great solemnity, received, no doubt, with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood, Daniel, that understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honourably employed to make known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow

shadow of at the end of another seventy, not years but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for his people and the holy city, that they might be released, that it might be rebuilt, but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think; God not only grants but outdoes the desires of them that fear him, *Psalms* xxi. 4.

1. The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general it is *seventy weeks*, i. e. *seventy times seven years*, which makes just four hundred and ninety years, i. e. the great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem will lie within the compass of these years. These years are thus described by weeks, (1.) In conformity to the prophetic style, which is for the most part abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking; that the things foretold might not lie too obvious. (2.) To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath-day, and to signify that that should be perpetual. (3.) With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so being now restored to it, they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it; so much more doth God delight in shewing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths in a melancholy sense seventy years, *Lev.* xxvi. 35. But now the people of the Lord shall in a comfortable sense enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which makes ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the dispensals of Providence, that we might see and admire the wisdom of him who hath determined the time before appointed.

The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks are,

1. Concerning the time when they commence, and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here dated from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, *ver.* 25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus mentioned, *Ezra* i. 1. for by it the people were restored, and though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus, *Isa.* xlv. 28. He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built. That was both in prophecy and history the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem this going forth of the commandment (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it, as of Cyrus's) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned *ver.* 23. which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplication. And it looks very graceful that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this, but that by this reckoning, the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted but an hundred and thirty years; whereas by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is computed that it continued two hundred and thirty years. So Thucydides, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict set aside these computations of the heathen historians, as uncertain, and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin the four hundred and ninety years not of the edict of Cyrus, *Ezra* i. 1. but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nothus, above one hundred years after, mentioned *Ezra* vi. Others in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who sent Ezra with a commission, *Ezra* vii. 8—12. The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said pro and con concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

2. Concerning the period of them. And here likewise interpreters are not agreed: some make them to end at the death of Christ; and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude, that from this very hour when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, was exactly four hundred and ninety years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think because it is said, that in the midst of the week, i. e. the last of the seventy weeks he shall cause his sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But they who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ read it thus, he shall make strong the testament to the many, the last seven or the last week, yea, half that seven or half that week, (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half, which Christ spent in his public ministry) shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation. Others make these four hundred and ninety years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews, and the holy city; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary,

3. Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week, and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the first seven weeks or forty-nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

But whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough clear and certain to answer the two great ends of determining them. (1.) It did serve then to raise and support the expectation of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs, the preceding prophets had often spoken of him, as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming until now. And though there might be so much doubt concerning the date of this reckoning that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy, they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find accordingly, that when Christ came he was generally looked for as the consolation of Israel and redemption in Jerusalem by him, *Luke* ii. 25—38. There were those that for this reason thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear, *Luke* xix. 11. and some think this was it that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, *Acts* ii. 6. (2.) It doth serve still to refuse and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another; this prediction silenceth them, and will condemn them, for reckon these seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain they are expired above fifteen hundred years ago, so that the Jews are for ever without excuse, who will not own that the Messiah is come, when they are gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and that our Jesus is he, that he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold, are more plain and easy to be understood at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold, (1.) Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement

again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for, and yet it is but briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, *ver.* 25. And the commandment shall not be in vain; for though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on and brought to perfection at last; the street shall be built again, as spacious and splendid as ever it was: and the walls even in troublous times. Note, as long as we are here in this world we must expect troublous times, upon some account or other; even then when we have joyous times, yet we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a lucid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain, when the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it even in troublous times: Nay, the troublousness of the times may by the grace of God contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted, the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah, and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them temporal power and wealth. Whereas they were here told, that the Messiah should come upon another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

1. Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that: Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, and alienated man from God, and provoked God against man; that was it that put dishonour upon God, and brought misery upon mankind, that was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of that. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He doth not say to finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general, for he is the propitiation not only for our sins that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole world. He came, (1.) To finish transgressions; to restrain it, so some. To brake the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief; to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruin of Satan's kingdom there; that where sin and death had reigned, righteousness and life through Christ might reign. When he died, he said, It is finished; sin has now had its death's wound given it; like Samson's Let me die with the Philistines. *Animamque in vulnere poni.* (2.) To make an end of sin, to abolish it; that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin. To seal up sins, so the margin read it, that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us. As when Christ cast the devil into the bottomless pit, he set a seal upon them, *Rev.* xx. 3. When sin is pardoned, it is sought for and not found, as that which is sealed up. (3.) To make reconciliation for iniquity, as by a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God, and so to make peace, and bring God and man together; not only as an arbitrator or referee, who only brings the contending parties to a good understanding one of another, but as surety or undertaker for us: He is not only the peace-maker, but the peace; He is the atonement.

He came to bring in an everlasting righteousness. God might justly have made an end of the sin, by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness wherein to appear before him. Had we stood, our innocence would have been our righteousness, but being fallen we must have something else to plead; and Christ has provided us a plea; the merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness: with this we answer all the demands of the law; Christ has died, you rather is risen again: Thus Christ is the Lord our righteousness, for he is made of God to us righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. By faith we apply this to ourselves, and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, *Rom.* iv. 3—5. This is an everlasting righteousness for Christ, who is our righteousness, and the prince of our peace, is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and will be to the end, for he is able to save to the uttermost. It is of everlasting virtue, *Heb.* x. 17. it is a rock that follows us to Canaan.

3. He came to seal up the vision and prophecy, i. e. all the prophetic visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah; he settled them up, i. e. he accomplished them, answered them to a tittle, all things that were written in the law; the prophets and the psalms concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in him; thus he confirmed the truth of them, as well as his own mission. He sealed them up, i. e. he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture canon, in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that by vision, *2 Pet.* i. 19. *Heb.* i. 1.

4. He came to anoint the most holy, i. e. himself, the holy One, who was anointed, that is, appointed to his work, and qualified for it by the holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure above his fellows. Or to anoint the gospel church, his spiritual temple or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate to himself, *Eph.* v. 26. Or to consecrate for us a new and living way into the holiest, by his own blood, *Heb.* x. 20. as the sanctuary was anointed, *Exod.* xxx. 25, &c. He is called Messiah, *ver.* 25, 26. which signifies Christ, Anointed, *John* i. 41. because he received the unction, both for himself, and for all that are his.

5. In order to all this the Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold, *Isa.* liii. 8. Hence when Paul preacheth the death of Christ, he saith he preached nothing but what the prophets said should come, *Acts* xxvi. 22, 23. And thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself, nor for any sin of his own; but as Caiaphas prophesied, he must die for the people in our stead, and for our good. Not for any advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more but the glory he had before, *John* xvii. 4, 5. No, it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

6. He must confirm the covenant to many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a new covenant of grace; since it was become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocency; this covenant he shall confirm, by his doctrine and miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept of us upon gospel terms. His death made his Testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to the many, i. e. to the common people, the poor were evangelized, when the rulers and Pharisees believed not in him. Or he confirmed it with many, i. e. with the Gentile world; the New Testament was not (like the Old) confirmed to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave his life a ransom for many.

7. He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; by offering himself a sacrifice

sacrifice once for all, for he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices; shall supersede them, and set them aside: when the substance is come, the shadow shall be done away. He causeth all the peace offerings to cease, when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his Gospel to the world, which the apostles were entrusted to do, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease; the apostle to the Hebrews shews what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice we have now, than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation: and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, not only because it was the just punishment of those that put him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity and brought ruin upon them, but because as things were, it was necessary, to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish that law of commandments, and to vacate the obligation of it. But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it, still they kept it up with more zeal than ever, they would hear no talk of parting with it, they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying that Jesus should change the customs which Moses delivered them, Acts vi. 14. so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation which so incurably doted on them; this was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be finally destroyed, and not as now, for seventy years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now, (1.) It is here foretold, that the people of the prince that shall come shall be the instruments of this destruction, i. e. the Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come; Christ is the prince that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service, they are his armies, Matth. xxii. 7. Or the Gentiles, who though now strangers shall become the people of the Messiah, shall destroy the Jews. 2. That the destruction shall be by war, and the end of that war should be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans were by their own obstinacy made very long and very bloody, and they ended at length in the utter extirpation of that people. (3.) That the city and sanctuary should in a particular manner be destroyed, and laid waste. Titus the Roman general would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that this prophecy might be fulfilled. (4.) That all the resistance that should be made to this destruction should be in vain, the end of it shall be with a flood. It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against. (5.) That hereby the sacrifice and oblation shall be made to cease. And it must needs cease, when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it so confounded, that (they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron. (6.) That there should be an overspreading of abominations, a general corruption of the Jewish nation, and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it should be made desolate, 1 Thess. ii. 17. Or it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews, they could not endure them; which overspread the nation, and by which it was made desolate. For these are the words which Christ refers to, Matth. xxiv. 15. When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee, which is explained, Luke xxi. 20. When ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then flee. (7.) That the desolation shall be total and final; He shall make it desolate even until the consummation, i. e. He shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it was made desolate it should seem there is something more determined that is to be poured upon the desolate, ver. 27. and what should that be but the spirit of slumber? Rom. xi. 8—25, that blindness which is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and then all Israel shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

This chapter and the two next (which conclude this book) make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated to Daniel for the use of the church, not by signs and figures as before, chap. vii. and viii. but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the foregoing chapter; Daniel prayed daily, but had a vision only now and then. In this chapter we have something introductory to the prophecy; in the eleventh chapter the particular predictions, and chap. xii. the conclusion of it. This chapter shews us, (1.) Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation, before he had this vision, ver. 1—3. (2.) A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him, ver. 4—9. (3.) The encouragement that was given him to expect such a discovery of future events, as should be satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself, and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, though difficult, and to bear up under the lustre of it, though dazzling and dreadful, ver. 10—21.

1. IN the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, (whose name was called Belteshazzar); and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all; till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; 5. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the

voice of a multitude. 7. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

The vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus, i. e. of his reign, after the conquest of Babylon, his third since Daniel became acquainted with him, and a subject to him.

Here is, 1. A general idea of this prophecy. ver. 1. *The thing was true*; every word of God is so; it was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said, this he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet: *Et hoc puratus est verificare*; and if it was a word spoken from heaven, no doubt, it is steadfast, and may be depended upon. But the time appointed was long: as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was three hundred years, a long time indeed, when it is looked upon as to come. Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead: and then he might well say, *The time appointed was long*; but however it was made up as plain to him, as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he understood the thing, so distinctly was it delivered to him, and he did receive it, that he could say he had understanding of the vision; it did not so much operate upon his fancy as upon his understanding.

2. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision; not in expectation of it, nor when he prayed that solemn prayer, chap. ix. doth it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it; but purely from a principle of devotion, and pious sympathy with the afflicted people of God. He was mourning full three weeks, ver. 2. for his own sins and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think the particular occasion of his mourning was the slothfulness and indifference of many of the Jews who though they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value the privileges offered them: and perhaps it troubled him the more, because they that did so justified themselves by the example of Daniel, though they had not that reason to stay behind which he had. Others think it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose. (Ezra iv. 4, 5.) all the days of Cyrus; and gained their point from his son Cambyses, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world, and what opposition it meets with: how weak its friends are, and how active its enemies. During the days of Daniel's mourning he eat no pleasant bread; he could not live without meat, but he eat little, and very sparingly; and mortified himself in the quality, as well as quantity of what he eat, and may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the pleasant bread he used to eat, but that which was coarse and unpalatable, which he would not be tempted to eat any more of than was just necessary to support nature. As ornaments, so delicacies are very disagreeable to a day of humiliation. Daniel eat no flesh, drank no wine, nor anointed himself, for these three weeks time, ver. 3. Though he was now a very old man, and might plead that the decay of his nature required what was nourishing; though he was a very great man, and might plead, that being used to dainty meats, he could not be without them, it would prejudice his health if he were, yet when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus deny himself; he noted to the shame of many young ordinary people who cannot persuade themselves thus to deny themselves.

3. A description of that glorious person whom Daniel saw in vision; which it is generally agreed could be no other but Christ himself the eternal Word; he was by the side of the river Hiddekel, ver. 4. probably walking there, not for diversion, but devotion and contemplation, as Isaac walked in the field to meditate; and being a person of distinction he had his servants attending him at some distance. There he looked up, and saw one man, one alone, a certain man, even the man Christ Jesus; it must be he, for he appears in the same resemblance wherem he appeared to St. John in the isle of Patmos, Rev. i. 13, 14, 15. His dress was priestly, for he is the high-priest of our profession, clothed in linen, as the high-priest himself was on the day of atonement, that great day; his loins were girded, (in St. John's vision his paps were girded) with a golden girdle of the finest gold, that of Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in its kind. The girding of the loins notes his ready and diligent application to his work, as his Father's servant, in the business of our redemption. His shape was amiable, his body like the beryl, a precious stone of a sky-colour; his countenance was awful, and enough to strike terror on the beholders, for his face was, as the appearance of lightning, which dazzles the eyes, both frightens and threatens: his eyes were bright and sparkling as lamps of fire, his arms and feet shone like polished brass, ver. 6. His voice was loud and strong and very piercing, like the voice of a multitude. The Vox Dei can overpower the vox populi. Thus glorious did Christ appear, and it should engage us, (1.) To think highly and honourably of him. Now consider how great this man is, and in all things let him have the pre-eminence. (2.) To admire his condescension for us and our salvation. Over all this splendor he drew a veil, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and emptied himself.

4. The wonderful influence that this appearance had upon Daniel and his attendants, and the terror that it struck upon him and them.

1. His attendants saw not the vision, it was not fit they should be honoured with the sight of it; there is a divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from converse with which none are excluded that do not exclude themselves; but such a vision must be peculiar to Daniel that was a favourite. Paul's companions were aware of the light, but saw no man, Acts ix. 7.—xxii. 9. Note, It is the honour of those who are beloved of God, that what is hid from others is known to them. Christ manifests himself to them, but not to the world, John xiv. 22. But though they saw not the vision, they were seized with an unaccountable trembling, either from the voice they heard, or from some strange concussion or vibration of the air they felt, so it was, that a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves, probably among the willows that grew by the river's side. Note, There are many that have a spirit of bondage to fear, that never receive a spirit of adoption: to whom Christ has been, and will be never otherwise but a terror. Now the fright that Daniel's attendants were in, is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel's fancy, or the product of a heated

heated imagination of his own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.

2. He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only dazzled his eyes, but overwhelmed his spirit, so that *there remained no strength in him*, ver. 8. He said as Moses himself, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. His spirits were all employed, either in an intense speculation of the glory of this vision, or in the fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that his body was left in a manner lifeless and spiritless: he had no vigour in him, and was but one remove from a dead carcase: he looked as pale as death, his colour was gone, and his comeliness in him was *turned into corruption*, and he *retained no strength*. Note, The greatest and best of men cannot bear the immediate discoveries of the divine glory; no man can see it and live, it is next to death to see a glimpse of it as Daniel here; but glorified saints see *Christ as he is*, and can *bear the sight*. But though Daniel was thus dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he *heard the voice of his words*, and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed lest our reverence of God's glory, by which we should be awakened to hear his voice, both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a dread of him, as will disable or indispose us to hear it. It should seem that when the *vision of Christ terrified Daniel*, the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of mind: when *I heard the voice of his words, I fell into a slumber*, a sweet slumber on my face, and my face towards the ground: when he saw the vision he threw himself prostrate, into a posture of the most humble adoration, and *dropped asleep*, not as careless of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those that are under convictions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is enough in his word to quiet their spirits and make them easy, if they will but attend to it, and apply it.

10. ¶ And behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands. 11. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. 13. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. 15. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground and I became dumb. 16. And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. 19. And said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak: for thou hast strengthened me. 20. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to hear what Christ has to say to him; still we have him in a fright hardly and very slowly recovering himself, but is still answered and supported with good words and comfortable words. Let us see how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself, and gather up the several passages that are to the same purpose.

1. Daniel is in a great consternation, and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that touched him, set him at first upon his knees, and the palms of his hands, ver. 10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. *After two days he will receive us, and then the third day he will raise us up*. And we must not despise the day of small things, but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterwards he is helped up, but he stands trembling, ver. 11. for fear lest he fall again. Note, Before God gives strength and power unto his people, he makes them sensible of their own weakness. *I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble*, Heb. iii. 16.

But when afterwards Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs that he could stand steady, yet he tells us, ver. 15. that he set his face towards the ground and became dumb; he was as a man astonished, that knew not what to say; struck dumb with admiration and fear, and is loth to enter into discourse with one so far above him; he kept silence, yea, even from good; till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and when he opened his mouth, ver. 16. that which he had to say was to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak. O my lord, (so, in great humility this prophet calls the angel, though the angels in great humility called themselves fellow-servants to the prophets, Rev. xxii. 9.) by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, they break in upon me with violence, the sense of my sinful sorrowful state turns upon me when I see thy purity and brightness. Note, Man that has lost his integrity has reason to blush and be ashamed of himself, when he sees or con-

siders the glory of the blessed angels that keep their integrity. My sorrows turned upon me and I have retained no strength to resist them, or bear up a head against them. And again, ver. 17. like one half dead with the fright. He complains. As for me, straightway there remained no strength in me to receive the displays of the divine glory, and these discoveries of the divine will. Nay, there is no breath left in me, such a deliquium did he suffer, that he could not draw one breath after another, but panted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us that the treasure of divine revelation is put into earthen vessels, that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, and not by angels. Whatever we may wish in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain if we were tried, we should all be of Israel's mind at Mount Sinai, when they said to Moses, *Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die*, Exod. xx. 19. If Daniel could not bear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an excuse for his irreverent silence; which otherwise had been blame worthy. How can the servant of this my lord, talk with this my lord? Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God, it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion there is between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and no proportion at all between us and the holy God; and to acknowledge that we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. How shall we that are dust and ashes speak to the Lord of glory!

2. The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him, gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem, it was not he whose glory he saw in a vision, ver. 5, 6. that here touched him and talked with him: that was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, chap. viii. 16. That glorious appearance as that of the God of glory to Abraham, (Acts vii. 2.) was to give authority and to gain attention to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John, when he in a like case, fell at his feet as dead, Rev. i. 17. but here he did it by the angel whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision in the verses before; for he was like the similitude of the sons of men, ver. 16. one like the appearance of a man, ver. 18. When he only appeared as he had done before, chap. ix. 21, we do not find that Daniel was put into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him: touched him and set him upon his hands and knees, ver. 10. else he had still lain groveling; touched his lips, ver. 16. else he had been still dumb: again he touched him, ver. 16. and put strength into him, else he had been still staggering and trembling. Note, The hand of God's power going along with the word of his grace is alone effectual to redress all our grievance, and to rectify what is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us to our knees, sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us, for it is God that works on us and works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him. Thou art a man greatly beloved, ver. 11. And again, ver. 19. O man greatly beloved. Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual to revive the drooping spirits of the saints, than to be assured of God's love to them. Those are greatly beloved indeed, whom God loves, and it is comfort enough to know it.

3. He silenced his fears and encouraged his hopes with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not Daniel, ver. 12. And again, ver. 19. O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel. Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them, God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought upon the warrant of that to speak peace to themselves. And that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God plead against us with his great power, will he take advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? No, but he will put strength into us, Job xxiii. 6. so he did unto Daniel here, when by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledged it, ver. 19. When he had spoken to me I was strengthened. Note, God by his word puts life and strength and spirit into his people, for he saith be strong, power goes along with the word. And now Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace he is ready for any thing; now let my lord speak, and I can hear it, I can bear it, and am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me. Note, To those that (like Daniel here) have no might, God increaseth strength, Isa. xl. 29. And we cannot keep up our communion with God, but by strength derived from him; but when he is pleased to put strength into us, we must make a good use of it, and say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let God enable us to comply with his will, and then, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. *Du quod jubes, & jube quod vis*.

4. He assures him, that his failings and prayers were come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius, Acts x. 4. ver. 12. Fear not, Daniel. It is natural to fallen man to be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel needs not fear, for he has by three weeks humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive branch of peace; from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand the word of God that is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to chasten thyself before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard; as before at the beginning of thy supplication, chap. ix. 24. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightening to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to him, Psal. cxix. 130. From the first day that we begin to look towards God in a way of duty, he is ready to meet us in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer, *I said I will confess, and thou forgavest*.

5. He tells him, that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? If thou knewest on what errand I come, thou wouldest not be put into such a consternation by it. Note, If we rightly understand the meaning of God's dealing with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we should be better reconciled to them. I am come for thy words, ver. 12, to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers; thus when God's praying people doth call to him, he saith, Here I am, Isa. lviii. 9. what would you have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has in its time fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries. On what errand did the angel come to Daniel? He tells him, ver. 14. I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days. Daniel was a curious inquisitive man, that had been all his days inquiring into secret things, and it would be a mighty gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church, its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to

to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and if they be wearied, now they only run with the footmen, how will they contend with horses? Note, It would abate our resentment of present troubles, to consider, that we know not but much greater are before us which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the Messiah to appear, for yet the vision is for many days; the principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of, would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, near three hundred years after this. Now, that which the angel is entrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, or rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ that the angel gave to St. John to be delivered to the churches, Rev. i. 1. So here, ver. 21. I will shew thee what is written in the scriptures of truth, i. e. what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written, it is a scripture which remains, and cannot be altered: what I have written I have written. As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters patent, which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls, which are sealed among his treasures; the book of his decrees; both are scriptures of truth, nothing shall be added to or taken from either of them. The secret things belong not to us, only now and then some few paragraphs have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the things revealed, even the words of this law which belong to us and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written, in the scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our everlasting peace.

6. He gives him a general account of the adversaries of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected troubles would arise: and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last.

1. The kings of the earth are and will be its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed, Psal. ii. 2. The angel tells Daniel that he was to have come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days, just the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying: Cambyfes king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do them all the mischief he could, and the angel had been all that time employed to count-r-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot saith, This new king of Persia by hindering the temple, had hindered those good tidings which otherwise he should have brought him. The kings and kingdoms of the world, were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. When I am gone forth from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindnesses to the Jews, then the prince of Grecia shall come. ver. 20. The Grecian monarchy, though favourable to the Jews at first as the Persian was, yet will come to be vexatious to them; such is the state of the church-militant, when it is got clear of one enemy it has another to encounter; and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent; when one storm is blown over, it is not long before another riseth.

2. The God of heaven is and will be its protector, and under him the angels of heaven its patrons and guardians.

1. Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church; making his part good in defence of it twenty-one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia as counsel or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court and to do them service, ver. 13. And though much was done against them by the kings of Persia, God permitting it, it is likely much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined (witae's Haman's plot) if God had not prevented it by the ministrations of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has dispatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia, will continue to oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy, ver. 20. though he knows another as mischievous, even that of Grecia, will rise instead of it.

2. Here is Michael our prince, the great protector of the church, and the patron of its just but injured cause. The first of the chief princes, ver. 13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, 1 Thess. iv. 16. Jude 9. Others think Michael the archangel is no other but Christ himself, the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels, he whom Daniel saw in vision, ver. 5. He came to help me, ver. 13. and there is none but he that holdeth with me in those things, ver. 21. Christ is the church's prince: angels are not, Heb. ii. 5. He presides in the affairs of the church, and effectually provides for its good. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation; and if he were not on the church's side its case were bad. But, saith David, and so saith the church, The Lord taketh my part with them that help me, Psal. cxviii. 7. The Lord is with them that uphold my soul, Psal. liv. 4.

C H A P. XI.

The angel Gabriel in this chapter performs his promise made to Daniel in the foregoing chapter, that he would shew him what should befall his people in the latter days, according to that which was written in the scriptures of faith; very particularly doth he here foretel the succession of the kings of Persia and Grecia, and the affairs of their kingdom, especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes did in his time to the church, which was foretold before, chap. viii. 11, 12. Here is, (1.) A brief prediction of the setting up of the Grecian monarchy upon the ruins of the Persian monarchy, which was now newly begun, ver. 1-4. (2.) A prediction of the affairs of the two kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, with reference to each other, ver. 5-20. (3.) Of the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, and his actions and successes, ver. 21-29. (4.) Of the great mischief that he should do to the Jewish nation and religion, and his contempt of all religion, ver. 30-39. (5.) Of his fall and ruin at last, when he is in the heat of his pursuit, ver. 40-45.

1. **A**LSO I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I stood, to confirm and to strengthen him. 2. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia: and the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm

of Grecia. 3. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided: and the four winds of heaven: and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

Here, 1. The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he had done to the Jewish nation, ver. 1. In the first year of Darius the Mede who destroyed Babylon, and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, I stood a strength and fortress to him, i. e. I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his wars, and after he had conquered Babylon to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews; which, it is likely, met with much opposition: Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the ax laid to the root of the tree. Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions; and herein he useth the ministry of angels more than we are aware of. And the many instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly, encourage us to depend upon him in further straits and difficulties.

2. He foretels the reign of four Persian kings, ver. 2. Note I will tell thee the truth, i. e. the true meaning of the visions of the great image, and of the four beasts, and expound in plain terms what was before represented by dark types. (1.) There shall stand up three kings in Persia; besides Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, chap. x. 1. Mr. Broughton makes these three to be Cyrus, Artaxasta, or Artaxerxes, called by the Greeks Cambyfes, and Ahasuerus that married Esther, called Darius son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes, Cyrus was a father, Cambyfes a master, and Darius a hoarder up. So Herodotus. (2.) There shall be a fourth far richer than they all; viz. Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength, i. e. his vast army, consisting of eight hundred thousand men at least, and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes's expedition against Greece, is famous in history, and his shameful defeat that he met with. He that when he went out was the terror of Greece, in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not be told what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindering it, Ezra vi. 7.

3. He foretels Alexander's conquest, and the partition of his kingdom, ver. 3. He is that mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall rule with great dominion over many kingdoms, and with a despotic power, for he shall do according to his will, and undo likewise, which by the law of the Medes and Persians their kings could not: when Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he shall do according to his will. That is God's prerogative, but was his pretension. But ver. 4. his kingdom shall soon be broken and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity, nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories, nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was plucked up for others besides those of his own family. Arideus, his brother, was made king of Macedonia: Olympias, Alexander's mother, killed him; and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Hercules and Alexander, thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying, perishing things worldly pomp and possession are, and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shewed more evidently than in the story of Alexander; all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

5. ¶ And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion: 6. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but he shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times; 7. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8. And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. 9. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. 10. But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. 11. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north; and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12. And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. 13. For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come (after certain years) with a great army and with much riches. 14. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision: but they shall fall. 15. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mountain and take

the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither, his chosen people, neither *shall there be any strength to withstand.* 16. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed. 17. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. 18. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease: without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. 19. Then he shall turn his face towards the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. 20. Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom; but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

Here is foretold,

1. The rise and power of two great kingdoms out of the remains of Alexander's conquests, *ver. 5.* (1.) The kingdom of Egypt, which was made considerable by Ptolemæus Lagus, one of Alexander's captains, whose successors were from him called the Lagidæ. He is called the king of the south, i. e. Egypt, named here, *ver. 8—42, 43.* The countries that at first belonged to Ptolemy are reckoned to be Egypt, Phœnicia, Arabia, Libya, Ethiopia, &c. Theocr. Idyl. 17. (2.) The kingdom of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus Nicanor, or the conqueror; he was one of Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the other: and *had the greatest dominion of all,* was the most powerful of all Alexander's successors; it was said he had no less than seventy-two kingdoms under him. Both these were strong against Judah (the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prediction.) Ptolemy soon after he gained Egypt invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a sabbath, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Judea.

2. The fruitless attempt to unite these two kingdoms, as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, *ver. 6.* At the end of certain years, about seventy after Alexander's death, the Lagidæ and the Seleucidæ shall associate; but not in sincerity: Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, shall marry his daughter Berenice to Antiochus Theus king of Syria, who had already a wife called Laodice. Berenice shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but it shall not hold; *he shall not retain the power of the arm;* neither she nor her posterity shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the north, neither shall Ptolemy her father, nor Antiochus her husband (betwixt whom there was to be a great alliance) stand, nor their arm, but *she shall be given up and they that brought her,* all that projected that unhappy marriage between her and Antiochus, which occasioned much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the northern and southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again, who soon after poisoned him, procured Berenice and her son to be murdered, and set up her own son by Antiochus to be king, who was called Seleucus Callinicus.

A war between the two kingdoms, *ver. 7, 8.* A branch from the same root with Berenice shall stand up in his estate. Ptolemæus Evergetes, the son and successor of Ptolemæus Philadelphus, shall come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail. And he shall carry away rich booty both of persons and goods into Egypt; and shall continue more years than the kings of the north; This Ptolemy reigned forty-six years: and Justin saith, if his own affairs had not called him home, he had in this war made himself master of the whole kingdom of Syria. But, *ver. 9.* he shall be forced to come into his kingdom, and return into his own land, to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

4. The long and busy reign of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. Seleucus Callinicus, that king of the north, that was overcome, *ver. 7.* and died miserably, left two sons, Seleucus and Antiochus; these are his sons, i. e. the sons of the king of the north, that shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces to recover what their father had lost, *ver. 10.* But Seleucus the elder, being weak, and unable to rule his army, was poisoned by his friends, and reigned only two years; and his brother Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned thirty-seven years, and was called the Great: And therefore the angel, though he speaks of sons at first, goes on with the account of one only; who was but fifteen years old when he began to reign, and he shall certainly come and overthrow, and over-run, and shall be restored at length to what his father lost. (1.) The king of the south in this war shall at first have very great success. Ptolemæus Philopater, moved with indignation at the indignities done by Antiochus the Great, shall (though otherwise a slothful prince) come forth and fight with him; and shall bring a vast army in o the field of seventy thousand foot, and five thousand horse, and seventy-three elephants. And the other multitude, (i. e.) the army of Antiochus, (consisting of sixty-two thousand foot, and six thousand horse, and a hundred and two elephants) shall be given into his hand. Polybius who lived with Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle of Raphia. Ptolemæus Philopater having gained this victory, grew very insolent, his heart was lifted up, then he went into the temple of God at Jerusalem, and in defiance of the law, entered the most holy place; for which God has a controversy with him, so that though he shall cast down many myriads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to secure his interest. For the king of the north, Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater army than the former; and at the end of times, that is, years, he shall come often with a mighty army; and great riches against the king of the south, viz. Ptolemæus Epiphanes, who succeeded Ptolemæus Philopater his father when he was a child, which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great. In this expedition he had some powerful allies, *ver. 14.* many shall stand up against the king of the south; Philip of Macedonia was confederate with Antiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas his general, whom he sent into Syria: Antiochus routed him, destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, helped him to besiege Ptolemæus's garri- sons, then the robbers of thy people shall exult themselves to establish the vision, to help forward the accomplishment of this prophecy, but they shall fall, and shall come to nothing, *ver. 14.* hereupon, *ver. 15.* the king of

the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his design against the king of the south another way. (1.) He shall surprise his strong holds; all that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the south, all the power of the king of Egypt shall not be able to withstand him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing; sometimes one side gets the better, and sometimes the other; yet neither by chance, it is not as they call it, the fortune of war, but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low and raiseth others up. (2.) He shall make himself master of the land of Judea, *ver. 6.* He that comes against him, i. e. the king of the north shall carry all before him, and do what he pleases, and he shall stand, and get footing in the glorious land, to the land of Israel was; and by his hand it was wasted and consumed; for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them, that was sure to suffer; for to it they both bore ill will. Yet some read this, *by his hand it shall be per- fected;* as if it intimated, that the land of Judea being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish and be in better condition than it had been. (3.) He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, taking advantage of the infancy of Ptolemy Epiphanes; and the upright ones, i. e. many of the pious Israelites siding with him, *ver. 17.* And in prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; designing as Saul, in giving his daughter to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand on her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him. (4.) His war with the Romans is here foretold, *ver. 18.* he shall turn his face to the isles, *ver. 18.* the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5. Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont, Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c. which by war or treaty he made himself master of; but a prince, or state, so some, even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Ro- man general shall return his reproach, with which he abused the Romans, upon himself; or shall make his shame rest on himself: And without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus; Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy, and waste it as he had done; but he did not take his advice; and Scipio joined battle with him, and gave him a total defeat, though Antiochus had seventy thou- sand men, and the Romans but thirty thousand. Thus he caused the re- proach offered by him to cease. (5.) His fall: When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to quit all he had in Europe to them, and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and not knowing which way to raise money to pay his tribute, he plundered a temple of Jupiter, which so incensed his own subjects against him, that they set upon him and killed him, so he was overthrown and fell, and was no more found, *ver. 19.* (6.) His next successor, *ver. 20.* There rose up one in his place, a raiser of taxes, a sower forth of the extor- tioner or extorter: This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who was a great op- pressor of his own subjects; and exacted abundance of money from them; and when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said, he knew no better friend he had than money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which this seems especially to refer to. But within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle, but poi- soned by Heliodorus, one of his servants; when he had reigned but twelve years, and done nothing remarkable.

From all this let us learn, (1.) That God in his providence sets up one and pulls down another as he pleaseth; *advanceth some from low beginnings, and depresseth others that were very high.* Some have called great men the foot-ball of fortune; or rather they are the tools of pro- vidence. (2.) This world is full of wars and fightings, which come from men's lust, and make it a theatre of sin and misery. (3.) All the changes and revolutions of states and kingdoms, and every event, even the most minute and contingent, was plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven, and to him nothing is new. (4.) No word of God that fall to the ground; but what he hath designed, what he hath declared, shall in- fallibly come to pass; and even the sins of his men shall be made to serve his purpose, and contribute to the bringing of his counsels to birth in their season; and yet God is not the author of sin. (5.) That for the right understanding of some parts of scripture, it is necessary that heathen authors be consulted, which give light to the scripture, and shew the ac- complishment of what is there foretold; we have therefore reason to bless God for the human learning, with which many have done great service to divine truths.

21. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. 25. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26. Yea, they that feed of the por- tion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. 27. And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. 28. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant: and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. 29. At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30.

¶ For

¶ For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do: He shall even return and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32. And such as do wickedly against the covenant, shall be corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many, yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34. Now when they shall fall they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed. 35. And the king shall do according to his will: and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38. But in his estate shall he honour the god of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the *little horn* spoken of before, chap. viii. ix. a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews met with in the reigns of the Persian kings, were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these; because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zechariah to encourage them, but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because before that time prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus, are alluded to in the *New Testament* predictions of the Antichrist, especially ver. 36, 37. And as it is usual with the prophets when they foretell the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions as were applicable to the *kingdom of Christ*, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so when they foretell the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a further reference to the *kingdom of the Antichrist*, the rise and ruin of that.

Now concerning Antiochus, the angel foretels here,

1. His character: He shall be a *vile person*: He called himself Epiphanes the *illustrious*, but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an *odd humoured* man, rude and boisterous, base and sordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd himself with any *scoundrel* company *incognito*; he made himself a companion of the common sort, and the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be *filly*, others to be *mad*. Hence he was called Epimanes, the mad man. He is called a *vile person*, for he had been a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father, when the Romans had subdued him: And it was agreed, that when the other hostages were *exchanged*, he should continue a prisoner at large.

2. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother's son Demetrius to be sent a hostage to Rome in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and his elder brother being made away by Heliodorus, ver. 20. he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not *give it him*, ver. 21. because they knew it belonged to his elder brother's son, nor did he get it by the sword, but *came in peaceably*, pretending to reign for his brother's son Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome: But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by flatteries obtained the kingdom, and established himself in it; and crushed Heliodorus who made head against him with the arms of a flood; they that opposed him were *overflowed and broken before him*, even the prince of the covenant, his nephew, and rightful heir, whom he pretended to covenant with, that he would *reign* to him, whenever he should return, ver. 22. But, ver. 23. after the league made with him, he shall *work*

deceitfully, as one whose avowed maxim it is, that princes ought not to be bound by their word any longer than it is for their interest. And with a *small people*, that at first cleave to him, he shall *become strong*, and ver. 24. He shall enter peaceably upon the *fastest places* of the kingdom of Syria, and very unlike his predecessors, shall scatter among the people the prey, the spoil, and riches, to insinuate himself into their affections, but at the same time he shall *forecast his devices against the strong holds*, to make himself master of them; so that his generosity shall last but for a time; when he has got the garbison into his hands, he will *scatter his spoil* no more, but rule by force; as those commonly do, that come in by fraud: He that comes in like a fox, reigns like a lion. Some understand these verses of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemy Philometor, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strong holds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

3. His war with Egypt: which was his second expedition thither. This is described, ver. 25, 26, 27. Antiochus shall *stir up his power and courage* against Ptolemaus Philometor, king of Egypt. Ptolemy thereupon shall be stirred up to battle against him, shall come against him with a *very great and mighty army*; but Ptolemy, though he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him: for Antiochus's army shall overtake his, and overpower it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall *fall down slain*. And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors; they that *sued of the portion of his meat*, that eat of his bread and live upon him, being bribed by Antiochus, shall *forecast devices against him*, and even they shall destroy him: and what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle a treaty of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council-board, to adjust the articles of peace between them, but they shall neither of them be sincere in it; for they shall in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship *lie one to another*, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no marvel it shall not prosper: The peace shall not last; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the divine providence, and then the war shall break out again; as a fore that is only skinned over.

4. Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned with great riches, ver. 28. and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by the divine providence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, ver. 29. He shall come towards the south. But this attempt shall not succeed as the two former did, nor shall he gain his point as he had done before once and again; for, ver. 30. The ships of Chittim shall come against him, i. e. the navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Roman senate, who came in ships. Ptolemaus Philometor, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, craved their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria; the Roman senate, thereupon sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege; which, when he desired some time to consider of, and consult with his friends about, Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his staff drew a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a *positive answer* before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immediately to give orders for the raising of the siege, and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy and others relate the story which this prophecy refers to, he shall be grieved and return, for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

5. His rage and cruel practices against the Jews. This is that part of his government or mis-government rather, which is most enlarged upon in this prediction. In his return from his expedition into Egypt, which is prophesied of, ver. 28. he did exploits against the Jews, in the sixth year of his reign: Then he spoiled the city and temple; but the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt, two years after, prophesied of, ver. 30. Then he took Judea in his way home; and because he could not gain his point in Egypt, by reason of the Romans interposing, he wreaked his revenge upon the poor Jews who gave him no provocation, but had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it, Dan. viii. 23.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to the Jews religion. His heart was against the holy covenant, ver. 28. and ver. 30. He had indignation against the holy covenant; that covenant of peculiarity by which the Jews were incorporated, a people distinct from all other nations and dignified above them. He hated the law of Moses and the worship of the true God, and was vexed at the privileges of the Jewish nation, and the promises made to them. Note, That which is the hope and joy of the people of God is the envy of their neighbours, and that is the holy covenant. Esau hated Jacob, because he had got the blessing. And those that are strangers to the covenant, are often enemies to it.

2. He carried on his malicious designs against the Jews by the assistance of some perfidious apostate Jews. He kept up intelligence with them that forsook the holy covenant, ver. 30. Some of the Jews that were false to their religion, and introduced the customs of the heathen, with whom they made a covenant. See the fulfilling of this, 1 Mac. i. 11—15. where it is expressly said concerning these renegade Jews, that they made themselves *uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant*. And 2 Mac. iv. 9. we read of Jason the brother of Onias the high-priest, who by the appointment of Antiochus set up a school at Jerusalem, for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen. And 2 Mac. iv. 23, &c. of Menelaus, who fell in with the interests of Antiochus, and was the man that helped him into Jerusalem now in his last return from Egypt. We read much in the book of the Maccabees of the mischief done to the Jews by these treacherous men of their own nation, Jason and Menelaus, and their party. These upon all occasions he made use of, such as do wickedly against the covenant, that throw up their religion and comply with the heathen, he shall corrupt with flatteries, to harden them in their apostasy, and to make use of them as decoys to draw in others, ver. 32. Note, It is not strange if those who do not live up to their religion, but in their conversations do wickedly against the covenant, are easily corrupted by flatteries to quit their religion. They that make shipwreck of a good conscience, will soon make shipwreck of the faith.

3. He profaned the temple. Arms stand on his part, ver. 31. not only his own army which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deserters from the Jewish religion that joined with them, and they polluted the sanctuary of strength, not only the holy city but the temple. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. i. 21, &c. They entered proudly into the sanctuary, took away the golden altar and the candlestick, &c. And therefore, ver. 25. There was a great mourning in Israel, the princes and elders mourned, &c. And 2 Mac. v. 15, &c. Antiochus went into the most holy temple, Menelaus that traitor to the laws, and to his own country being his guide. Antiochus having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, took away the daily sacrifice, ver. 31. Some observe, that the word *Lam-nith*, which signifies no more but daily, is only here and in the parallel places used for the daily sacrifice, as if there were a designed liberty left to supply it either with sacrifice, which was suppressed by Antiochus, or

with gospel worship, which was suppressed by the Antichrist. Then he set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, 1 Mac. i. 54. even an idol altar, ver. 59, and called the temple of Jupiter Olympius, 2 Mac. vi. 2.

4. He persecuted those who retained their integrity. Though there are many that forsake the covenant, and do wickedly against it, yet there is a people that do know their God, and retain the knowledge of him, and they shall be strong and do exploits, ver. 32, when others yield to the tyrant's demands, and surrender their consciences to his impositions, they bravely keep their ground; resist the temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, when he had swine's flesh thrust into his mouth, bravely spit it out again, though he knew he must be tormented to death for so doing; and was so, 2 Mac. vi. 19. The mother and her seven sons were put to death for adhering to their religion, 2 Mac. vii. This might well be called doing exploits; for to choose suffering rather than sin is a great exploit. And it was by faith, by being strong in faith, that they did those exploits, that they were tortured not accepting deliverance, as the apostle speaks, probably with reference to that story, Heb. xi. 35. Or it may refer to the military courage and achievements of Judas Maccabæus and others in opposition to him. Note, The right knowledge of God is and will be the strength of the soul, and in the strength of that gracious soul, do exploits. They that know his name will put their trust in him, and by that trust will do great things.

Now, concerning this people that knew their God, we are here told, (1.) That they shall instruct many, ver. 33. They shall make it their business to shew others what they have learned themselves of the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil. Note, they that have the knowledge of God themselves should communicate their knowledge to those about them, and this spiritual charity must be extensive; they must instruct many. Some understand this of a society newly erected for the propagating of divine knowledge, called *Affideans*, godly men, *Pietists* for the name signifies, that were both knowing and zealous in the law; these instructed many. Note, In times of persecution and apostacy, which are trying times, those that have knowledge ought to make use of it for the strengthening and establishing of others. They that understand aright themselves ought to do what they can to bring others to understand: for knowledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, they shall instruct many by their perseverance in their duty, and their patient suffering for it: Good examples instruct many, and with many are the most powerful instructions. (2.) They shall fall by the cruelty of Antiochus; shall be put to the torture, and put to death by his rage. Though they are so excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful and serviceable to others, yet Antiochus shall shew them no mercy, but they shall fall for some days. So it may be read, Rev. ii. 10. *Thou shalt have tribulation ten days.* We read much in the books of the Maccabees of Antiochus's barbarous usage of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars, and how many he murdered in cold blood. Women were put to death for having their children circumcised, and their infants hanged about their necks, 1 Mac. i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer this? How can this be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God? I answer, Very well, if we consider what it was that God aimed at in this, ver. 35. *Some of them of understanding shall fall;* but it shall be for the good of the church, and for their own spiritual benefit. *It shall be, to try them, and to purge and to make them white.* They needed these afflictions themselves; the best have their spots, which must be washed off, their dross, which must be purged out, and their troubles, particularly their share in the public troubles, help to do this; being sanctified to them by the grace of God: They are means of mortifying their corruptions, weaning them from the world, and awakening them to greater seriousness and diligence in religion. They try them as silver in the furnace is refined from its dross; they purge them as wheat in the barn is winnowed from the chaff; and make them white, as cloth by the fuller is cleared from its spots. See 1 Pet. i. 7. Their suffering for righteousness sake would try and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince them of the truth, excellency and power of that holy religion, which these understanding men died for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and not a drop of it should be shed upon such a valuable consideration. (3.) The cause of religion, though it be thus run upon, yet it shall not be run down. *When they shall fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, but they shall be helped with a little help,* ver. 34. Judas Maccabæus and his brethren, and a few of them shall make head against the tyrant; and assert the injured cause of their religion, they pulled down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out of the hand of the Gentiles, and the work prospered in their hands, 1 Mac. ii. 45. Note, Those that stand by the cause of religion when it is threatened and struck at, though they may not presently be delivered, and made victorious, yet they shall have present help. And a little help must not be despised; but when times are very bad we must be thankful for some reviving. It is likewise foretold that many shall cleave to them with flatteries; when they see the Maccabees prosper, some Jews shall join with them, that are no true friends to religion, but only will pretend friendship, either with design to betray them, or in hope to rise with them; but the fiery trial (ver. 35.) will separate between the precious and the vile, and by it they that are perfect will be made manifest, and they that are not. (4.) Though their troubles may continue long, yet they will have an end; they are for a time appointed; a limited time, fixed in the divine counsels: this warfare shall be accomplished; hitherto the power of the enemy shall come and no further, here shall its proud waves be staid.

5. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane, and being puffed up with the conquests, bid defiance to heaven, and trampled upon every thing that was sacred, ver. 36, &c. And here some think begins a prophecy of the Antichrist, the papal kingdom: And it is plain, St. Paul in his prophecy of the rise and reign of the man of sin alludes to this here, 2 Thess. ii. 4. which shews that Antiochus was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also was; but this being joined in a continued discourse with the foregoing prophecies concerning Antiochus, to me it seems probable, that to him it principally refers, and in him had its primary accomplishment, and has reference to the other only by way of accommodation.

1. He shall impiously dishonour the God of Israel; the only living and true God, called here *God of gods*. He shall in defiance of him and his authority do according to his will against his people and his holy religion: he shall exalt himself above him, as Sennacherib did, and shall speak marvellous things against him, and against his laws and institutions: This was fulfilled, when Antiochus forbade sacrifices to be offered in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c. to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And this upon pain of death, 1 Mac. i. 45.

2. He shall proudly put contempt upon all other Gods; shall magnify himself above every god, even the gods of the nations: Antiochus wrote to his own kingdom, that every one would leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the

conquerors that went before him, 1 Mac. i. 41, 42. And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king as fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for, but their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped. Antiochus did not regard any god, but magnified himself above all, ver. 37. He was so proud, that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could command the waves of the sea, and reach the fairs of heaven, as his insolence and naughtiness is expressed, 2 Mac. ix. 8-10. Thus he carried all before him till the indignation was accomplished, ver. 36. till he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity; for that that is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

3. He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the God of his fathers, ver. 37. Though an affection to the religion of their ancestors was among the heathen almost as natural to him as the desires of women; for if you search through the isles of Chittim, you will not find an instance of a nation that has changed their gods, Jer. ii. 10, 11. Yet Antiochus shall not regard the god of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks. And though his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple at Jerusalem, 2 Mac. iii. 2, 3. he did the greatest indignities to God and his temple. His not regarding the desire of women, may speak either his barbarous cruelty, he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones; or, his unnatural lusts, or in general, his contempt of every thing which men of honour have a concern for: Or, it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. His being joined to his not regarding the god of his fathers, intimates that the idolatries of his country had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than those of other countries, (Lucian has written of the Syrian goddesses) and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

4. He shall set up an unknown god; a new God; ver. 28. In his estate, in the room of the god of his forefathers, (Apollo and Diana, deities of pleasure) he shall honour the god of forces, a supposed deity of power, a god whom his fathers knew not, nor worshipped; because he will be thought in wisdom and strength to excel his fathers, he shall honour this god with gold and silver, and precious stones, thinking nothing too good for the god he had taken a fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympius; known among the Phœnicians by the name of *Baal-Semen*, the lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus did it. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds, in the temple of Jerusalem, which is called the sanctuary of strength, ver. 31. and here the fortresses of munitions; there he shall set up the image of this strange god. Some read it, *He shall commit the munitions of strength,* or of the most strong God, i. e. the city of Jerusalem to a strange god, he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympius. This God he shall not only acknowledge, but shall increase with glory, by setting his image even upon God's altar. And he shall cause them that minister to this idol, to rule over many, shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall divide the land for gain, shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some by the Mahuzzim, or god of forces, that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the man of sin; he exalteth himself above all that is called god, or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all; his flatterers call him our lord god the Pope. By forbidding marriage, and magnifying the single life, he pretends not to regard the desire of women; and honours the god of forces, the god Mahuzzim, or strong holds, i. e. saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their demons: these they make presidents of several countries, &c. These they honour with vast treasures dedicated to them, and therein the learned Mr. Mede thinks this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

5. Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or at least a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Ptolemy, but now that king of the south pushed at him, ver. 40. makes an attempt upon some of his territories; whereupon Antiochus the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, with incredible swiftness and fury, with chariots and horses, and many ships, a great force; he shall come through countries, and shall overflow and pass over; in this flying march many countries shall be overthrown by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the pleasant land, chap. viii. 9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations thereabout, yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon, ver. 41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews. But especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it. This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Ptolemæus Philometer against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder, for it should seem that was it he came for: *He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt,* ver. 43. Polybius in Athenæus relates, that Antiochus having got together abundance of wealth by spoiling young Philometer, and breaking league with him, and by the contributions of his friends, bestowed a vast deal upon a triumph, in imitation of Paulus Æmilius; and describes the extravagance of it; here we are told how he got that money which he spent so profusely. Notice is here taken likewise of the use he made of the Lybians and Ethiopians, who bordered upon Egypt, they were at his steps, i. e. he had them at his foot, had them at his beck, and they made roads upon Egypt to serve him.

6. Here is a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus, as before, chap. viii. 25. when he is in the height of his honour, flushed with victory and laden with spoils, tidings out of the east, and out of the north, (i. e. out of the north-east) shall trouble him, ver. 44. Or, he shall have intelligence both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him; and this vexed him; for now he thought utterly to have ruined and extirpated the Jewish nation, when that expedition called him off, in which he perished. This is explained by a passage in Tacitus (though an impious one) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superstition of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks among them (*ut te terrimam gentem in melius mutaret*) and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is,

1. The last effort of his rage against the Jews, when he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs, he shall go forth with great fury, to destroy and utterly to make away many, ver. 44. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. iii. 27, &c. what a rage Antiochus was in when he heard of the successes of Judas Maccabæus, and the orders he gave to Lyfias to destroy Jerusalem. Then he planted the tabernacles of his palace, or tents of his court between the seas, between the great sea, and the Dead-sea; he set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus near Jerusalem, in token, that though he could not

not be present himself, yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigour. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain, and called it his own. Note, When impiety grows very impudent we may see its ruin near.

2. His exit. *He shall come to his end, and none shall help him, i. e. God shall cut him off in the midst of his days, and none shall be able to prevent his fall.* This is the same with that which was foretold, chap. viii. 25. *He shall be broken without hand,* where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time is come to bring proud oppressors to their end, none shall be able to help them, nor perhaps inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all, when they are in their grandeur, when they come to be in distress will find themselves loved by none; none will lend them so much as a hand or a prayer to help them; and if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious, mischievous, enemy to the church, that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

C H A P. XII.

After the prediction of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, prefiguring the troubles of the Christian church under the antichristian power, we have here, (1.) Comforts, and very precious ones, prescribed as cordials for the support of God's people in those times of trouble, and they are such as may indifferently serve both for those former times of trouble under Antiochus, and those latter which were prefigured by them, ver. 1—4. (2.) A conference between Christ and an angel, concerning the time of the continuance of these events, designed for Daniel's satisfaction, ver. 5—7. (3.) Daniel's enquiry for his own satisfaction, ver. 8. And the answer he received to that enquiry, ver. 9—13.

1. **A**ND at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. 4. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

It is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the grievances of the church, to furnish it at the same time with proper antidotes; a remedy for every malady. And no relief is so sovereign, of such general application, so easily accommodated to every case, and of such powerful efficacy, as those that are fetched from Christ and the future state; thence the comforts here are fetched.

1. Jesus Christ shall appear his church's patron and protector. *At that time when the persecution is at the hottest, Michael shall stand up,* ver. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a fast friend Michael was to the church, chap. x. 21. He all along shewed it in the upper world, the angels knew it, but now Michael shall stand up in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, *when he sees that their power is gone,* Deut. xxii. 36. Christ is that great prince, for he is the prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. And if he stand up for his church, who can be against it? But this is not all, *at that time, i. e. soon after,* Michael shall stand up for the working out of our eternal salvation, the Son of God shall be incarnate, shall be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Christ stood for the children of our people, when he was made sin and a curse for them, stood in their stead as a sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; stands up for them, and stands their friend. And after the destruction of Antichrist, of whom Antiochus was a type, Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and shall appear for the complete redemption of all his.

2. When Christ appears he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people. There shall be a time of trouble, threatening to all, but ruining to all the implacable enemies of God's kingdom among men, such trouble as never was since there was a nation. Which is applicable, (1.) To the destruction of Jerusalem; which Christ calls (perhaps with an eye to this here) such a great tribulation as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, Matt. xxiv. 21. This the angel had spoken much of, chap. ix. 26, 27. and it happened about the same time, that Christ set up the gospel kingdom in the world, that Michael our prince stands up. Or, (2.) To the judgment of the great day; that day that shall burn as an oven, and consume the proud, and all that do wickedly; that will be such a day of trouble as never was, to all those whom Michael our prince stands against.

3. He will work salvation for his people; *at that time thy people shall be delivered,* delivered from the mischief and ruin designed them by Antiochus, even all those that were marked for preservation, that were written among the living, Isa. iv. 3. When Christ comes into the world he will save his spiritual Israel from sin and hell; and will at his second coming complete their salvation, even the salvation of as many as were given him, as many as had their names in the book of life, Rev. xx. 15. They were written there before the world, and will be found written there at the end of the world, when the books shall be opened.

4. There shall be a distinguishing resurrection of them that sleep in the dust, ver. 2. (1.) When God works deliverance for his people from persecution, it is a kind of resurrection; so the Jews release out of Babylon was represented in vision, Ezek. xxxvii. and to the deliverance of the Jews from Antiochus, and other restorations of the church to outward prosperity, they were as life from the dead; many of them that had long slept in the dust of obscurity and calamity shall then awake, some to that life and honour and comfort that will be lasting, everlasting; but others, that when they return to their prosperity will return to their iniquity, to them it will be a resurrection to shame and contempt, for the prosperity of fools will but expose them and destroy them. (2.) When upon the appearing of Michael our prince, his gospel is preached, many of them that sleep in the dust, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be awakened by it, to take upon them a profession of religion, and shall rise out of their Heathenism or Judaism; but since

there will be always a mixture of hypocrites with true saints, it is but some of them that are raised to life, to whom the gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, but others will be raised by it to *shame and contempt*, to whom the gospel of Christ will be a *savour of death unto death*; and Christ himself set for their fall. The net of the gospel incloseth both good and bad. But, (3.) It must be meant of the general resurrection at the last day. *The multitude of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, i. e. all,* which shall be a great many. Or of them that sleep in the dust, many shall arise to life, and many to shame. The Jews themselves understand this of the resurrection of the dead, at the end of time; and Christ seems to have had an eye to it when he speaks of the *resurrection of life*, and the *resurrection of damnation*, John v. 28. and upon this the Jews are said by St. Paul to expect a resurrection of the dead both of the just and of the unjust, Acts xxiv. 15. And nothing could come in more seasonably here, for under Antiochus's persecution, some basely betrayed their religion, others bravely adhered to it. Now it would be a trouble to them, that when the storm was over they could neither reward the one, nor punish the other; this therefore would be a satisfaction to them, that they would both be recompensed according to their works in the resurrection. And the apostle speaking of the pious Jews that suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, tells us, that though they were tortured, yet they *accepted not deliverance*, because they hoped to obtain this better resurrection, Heb. xi. 35.

5. There shall be a glorious reward conferred on those that in the day of trouble and distress, being themselves wise, did instruct many. Such were taken particular notice of in the prophecy of the persecution, chap. xi. 33. that they should do eminent service, and yet should fall by the sword and by flame; now if there were not another life after this, they would be of all men most miserable, and therefore we are here assured, that they shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, ver. 3. *They that be wise, that be teachers,* so some read it, for teachers have need of wisdom, and they that have wisdom themselves should communicate it to others; they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, shall shine in glory, heavenly glory, the glory of the upper world: and they that by the wisdom they have, and the instructions they give, are instrumental to turn any, especially to turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Note, 1. There is a glory reserved for all the saints in the future state, for all that are wise, wise for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now makes his face to shine, Eccles. viii. 1. But much more in that state where its power shall be perfected, and its services rewarded. 2. The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world. They that turn men to righteousness, that turn sinners from the error of their ways, and help to save their souls from death, (James v. 6.) will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own glory. 3. Ministers of Christ that have obtained mercy of him to be faithful and successful, and so are made burning and shining lights in this world, shall shine very bright in the other world; shall shine as the stars: Christ is the sun, the fountain of the lights, both of grace and glory; ministers as stars shine in both, with a light derived from him, and a diminutive light in comparison of him; yet to them that are earthen vessels, it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall shine as the stars of different magnitudes, some in lesser, others in greater lustre; but whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall shine for ever and ever, shall never set, never be eclipsed.

6. That this prophecy of those times, though sealed up now, would be of great use to them that should live then, ver. 4. Daniel must now shut up the words, and seal the book; because the time would be long ere these things were accomplished: and that was some comfort, that the Jewish nation, though in the infancy of their return from Babylon, while they were few and weak, they met with obstructions in their work, yet they were not persecuted for their religion till a long time after, when they were grown to some strength and maturity. He must seal the book because it would not be understood, and therefore would not be regarded, till the things contained in it were accomplished; but he must keep it safe as a treasure of great value, laid up for the ages to come; to whom it would be of great service, for many shall then run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Then this hid treasure shall be opened, and many shall search into it, and dig for the knowledge of it as for silver. They shall run to and fro to enquire out copies of it, shall collate them, and see that they be true and authentic; they shall read it over and over, shall meditate upon it, and run it over in their minds; discurrent, they shall discourse of it, and talk it over among themselves; and compare notes about it, if by any means they may sift out the meaning of it; and thus knowledge shall be increased: by consulting this prophecy on this occasion, they shall be led to search other scriptures, which shall contribute much to their advancement in useful knowledge; for then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, Hof. vi. 3. Those that would have their knowledge increased must take pains; must not sit still in slothfulness and bare wishes; but run to and fro, must make use of all the means of knowledge, and improve all opportunities of getting their mistakes rectified, their doubts resolved, and their acquaintance with the things of God improved; to know more, and to know better what they do know. And let us here see reason to hope, that, (1.) Those things of God which are now dark and obscure, will hereafter be made clear and easy to be understood. Truth is the daughter of time. Scripture prophecies will be expounded by the accomplishment of them; and therefore they are given, and for that explication they are reserved. Therefore they are told us before, that when they do come to pass we may believe. (2.) Those things of God which are despised and neglected, and thrown by as useless, shall be brought into reputation; shall be found to be of great service, and be brought into request; for divine revelation, however slighted for a time, shall be magnified and made honourable, and above all the judgment of the great day, when the books shall be opened, and that book among the rest.

5. ¶ Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7. And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. 8. And I heard, but I understood

not: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these things? 9. And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. 13. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Daniel had been made to foresee the amazing revolutions of states and kingdoms, as far as the Israel of God was concerned in them; in them he foresaw troublous times to the church, suffering trying times, the prospect of which much affected him, and filled him with concern: now there were two questions proper to be asked upon this head; *When shall the end be?* And *what shall the end be?* These two questions are asked and answered here in the close of the book; and though the comforts prescribed in the foregoing verses, one would think were satisfactory enough, yet for more abundant satisfaction this is added.

1. The question, *When the end shall be?* is asked by an angel, ver. 5, 6. And concerning this we may observe,

1. Who it was that asked the question. Daniel had had a vision of Christ in his glory, the man clothed in linen, chap. x. 5. But his discourse had been with the angel Gabriel, and now he looks and behold other two, ver. 5. Two angels, that he had not seen before; one upon the bank of the river on one side, and the other on the other side, that the river being between them, they might not whisper to one another, but what they said might be heard. Christ stood on the waters of the river, ver. 6. between the banks of Ulai, it was therefore proper that the angels his attendants should stand on either bank, that they might be ready to go one one way, and the other the other way, as he should order them. These angels appeared, (1.) To adorn the vision, and make it the more illustrious; and to add to the glory of the Son of man, Heb. i. 6. Daniel had not seen them before, though it is probable they were there, but now when they began to speak he looked up and saw them. Note, The further we look into the things of God, and the more we converse with them, the more we shall see of those things, and still new discoveries will be made us; they that know, much, if they improve it, shall know more. (2.) To confirm the discovery, that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses the word might be established. Three angels appeared to Abraham, (3.) To inform themselves to hear and ask questions; for the mysteries of God's kingdom are things which the angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. i. 12. and they are known to the church, Eph. iii. 10. Now one of these two angels said, *When shall the end be?* Perhaps they both asked, first one, and then the other, but Daniel heard only one.

2. To whom this question was put; to the man clothed in linen, of whom we read before, chap. x. 5. To Christ our great high-priest, who was upon the waters of the river, and whose spokesman or interpreter the angel Gabriel had all this while been. This river was Hiddekel, chap. x. 4. the same with Tigris, the place whereabouts many of the events prophesied of would happen; there therefore is the scene laid. Hiddekel was mentioned as one of the rivers that watered the garden of Eden, Gen. ii. 14. fitly therefore doth Christ stand upon that river, for by him the trees in the paradise of God are watered. Waters signify people, and so his standing upon the waters notes his dominion over all; he sits upon the flood, Psalm xxix. 10. He treads upon the waters of the sea, Job ix. 8. And Christ, to shew that this was he, in the days of the flesh, walked upon the waters, Matth. xiv. 25. He was above the waters of the river, so some read it; he appeared in the air over the river.

3. What the question was. *How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* Daniel would not ask the question, because he would not pry into what was hidden, nor seem inquisitive concerning the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power, Acts i. 7. But that he might have the satisfaction of the answer, the angel put the question in his hearing. Our Lord Jesus sometimes answered the questions which his disciples were afraid or ashamed to ask, John xvi. 19. The angel asked as one concerned, *How long shall it be?* What is the time prefixed in the divine counsels for the end of these wonders? i. e. these suffering trying times, that are to pass over the people of God? Note 1. The troubles of the church are the wonder of angels. They admire that God will suffer his church to be thus afflicted, and yet what good he will do his church by its afflictions. 2. Good angels know no more of things to come than God is pleased to discover to them, much less do evil angels. 3. The holy angels in heaven are concerned for the church on earth, and lay to heart its afflictions, how much more then should we, who are more immediately related to it, and have so much of our peace in its peace? 4. What answer was returned to it, by him who is indeed the numberer of secrets, and knows things to come.

1. Here is a more general account given of the continuance of these troubles to the angel that made the enquiry, ver. 7. that they shall continue for a time, times, and an half, i. e. a year, two years, and a half year, as was before intimated, chap. vii. 25. but the one half of a prophetic week; some understand it indefinitely, a certain time for an uncertain; it shall be for a time, i. e. a considerable time, for times, a longer time yet, double to what it was thought at first it would be; and yet indeed it shall be but half a time, or a part of a time; when it is over, it shall seem not half so much as was feared. But it is rather to be taken for a certain time; we meet with it in the Revelations, under the title sometimes of three days and a half, put for three years and a half; sometimes forty-two months, sometimes twelve hundred and sixty days. Now this determination of the time is here, (1.) Confirmed by an oath. The man clothed in linen lift up both his hands to heaven, and sware by him that lives for ever and ever, that it shall be so. Thus the mighty angel whom St. John saw is brought in, with a plain reference to this vision here, standing with his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and with his hand lift up to heaven, swearing that there shall be no longer delay, Rev. x. 5, 6. This mighty one that Daniel saw stood with both feet on the water, and sware with both hands lifted up. Note, An oath is of use for confirmation; God only is to be sworn by, for he is the proper judge to whom we are to appeal; and lifting up the hand is a very proper and significant sign to be used in a solemn oath. (2.) It is illustrated with a reason; God will suffer him to prevail till he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people.

God will suffer him to do his worst, and run his utmost length, and then all these things shall be finished. Note, God's time to succour and relieve his people, is when their affairs are brought to the last extremity; in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, that Isaac is saved just then when he lies ready to be sacrificed. Now the event answered the prediction; Josephus saith expressly, in his book of the wars of the Jews, that Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, surprised Jerusalem by force, and held it three years and six months, and is then cast out of the country by the Asmoneans or Maccabees. Christ's public ministry continued three years and a half, during which time he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and lived in poverty and disgrace, and then when his power seemed to be quite scattered at his death, and his enemies triumphed over him, he obtained the most glorious victory, and said, *It is finished.*

2. Here is something added more particularly concerning the time of the continuance of those troubles, in what is said to Daniel, ver. 11, 12. Where we have, (1.) The event fixed from which the time of the trouble is to be dated; from the taking away of the daily sacrifice by Antiochus, and the setting up of the image of Jupiter upon the altar, which was the abomination of desolation. Then they must reckon their troubles to begin indeed when they were deprived of the benefit of public ordinances; that was to them the beginning of sorrows, that was it they laid most to heart. (2.) The continuance of their trouble; it shall last twelve hundred and ninety days; three years and seven months; or as some reckon three years, six months, and fifteen days; and then it is probable the daily sacrifice was restored, and the abomination of desolation taken away in remembrance of which the feast of dedication was observed even to our Saviour's time, John x. 22. Though it do not appear by the history, that it was exactly so long to a day, yet it appears that the beginning of the trouble was in the one hundred and forty-fifth year of the Seleucidae, and the end of it in the one hundred and forty-eighth year; and either the restoring of the sacrifice, and the taking away of the image, was just so many days after, or some other previous event that was remarkable, which is not recorded. There are many particular times fixed in the scripture prophecies, which it doth not appear by any history, sacred or profane, that the event answered, and yet no doubt it did punctually; as Isa. xvi. 14. (3.) The completing of their deliverance, or at least a further advance towards it; which is here set forty-five days after the former, and some think points at the death of Antiochus, thirteen hundred and thirty-five days after his profaning the temple. Blessed is he that waits and comes to that time. It is said, 1 Mac. vi. 16. that Antiochus died in the one hundredth and forty-ninth year of the kingdom of the Greeks, and 2 Mac. ix. 28.—x. 1. that the Maccabees, under a divine conduct, recovered the temple and the city. Many good interpreters make these to be prophetic days, i. e. so many years, and date them from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but what events they then fall upon they are not agreed. Others date them from the corruption of the gospel worship by the Antichrist; whose reign is confined in the Apocalypse to twelve hundred and sixty days, i. e. years, at the end of which he shall begin to fall; but thirty years after he shall be quite fallen, at the end of twelve hundred and ninety days; and whoever lives forty years longer, to thirteen hundred and thirty-five days, will see glorious times indeed. Whether it looks so far forwards or no I cannot tell; but this however we may learn, (1.) That there is a time fixed for the period of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and this time will be punctually observed to a day. (2.) That this time must be waited for with faith and patience. (3.) That when it comes it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectations of it. Blessed is he that having waited long comes to it at last, for he will then have reason to say, *Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him.*

2. The question, *What the end shall be?* is asked by Daniel, and an answer given to it. Observe,

1. Why Daniel asked this question; it was because, though he heard what was said to the angel, yet he did not understand it, ver. 8. Daniel was a very intelligent man, and had been conversant in visions and prophecies, and yet here he was puzzled; he did not understand the meaning of the time, times, and the part of a time, at least not so clearly and with so much certainty as he wished. Note, The best men are often much at a loss in their inquiries concerning divine things, and meet with that which they do not understand. But the better they are the more sensible they are of their own weakness and ignorance, and the more ready to acknowledge it.

2. What the question was, *O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?* He directs his inquiry not to the angel that talked with him, but immediately to Christ, for to whom else should we go with our enquiries? What shall be the final issue of these events? What do they tend to? What will they end in? Note, When we take a view of the affairs of this world, and of the church of God in it, we cannot but think what will be the end of these things? We see things move as if they would end in the utter ruin of God's kingdom among men; when we observe the prevalence of vice and impiety, the decay of religion, the sufferings of the righteous, and the triumphs of the ungodly over them, we may well ask, *O my Lord, what will be the end of these things?* But this may satisfy us in general, that all will end well at last. Great is the truth, and will prevail at long run. All opposing rule, principality and power will be put down, and holiness and love will triumph, and be in honour to eternity. The end, this end, will come.

3. What answer is returned to this question. Besides what refers to the time, ver. 11, 12. of which before, here are some general instructions given to Daniel, with which he is dismissed from further attendance.

1. He must content himself with the discoveries that had been made to him, and not inquire any further. Go thy way, Daniel, let it suffice thee that thou hast been admitted thus far to the foresight of things to come, but stop here. Go thy way about the king's business again; chap. viii. 27. Go thy way and record what thou hast seen and heard for the benefit of posterity, and covet not to see and hear more at present. Note, Communion with God is not our continual feast in this world; we sometimes are taken to be witnesses of Christ's glory, and we say, *It is good to be here;* but we must go down from the mount, and have there no continuing city. Those that know much know but in part, and still see there is a great deal that they are kept in the dark about, and are likely to be so till the veil is rent; hitherto their knowledge shall go, but no farther; Go thy way, Daniel, satisfied with what thou hast.

2. He must not expect that what had been said to him would be fully understood till it was accomplished. The words are closed up and sealed, are involved in perplexities, and are likely to be so till the time of the end, till the end of these things; nay, till the end of all things. Daniel was ordered to seal the book till the time of the end, ver. 4. The Jews used to say, *When Elias cometh he will tell us all things.* They are closed up and sealed, i. e. The discovery designed to be made by them is now fully settled and completed; nothing is to be added to it or taken from it, for it is closed up and sealed; ask nor therefore after more; *Nescire velle quæ Magister maximus docere non vult erudita inscitia est.*

3. He must count upon no other, but that as long as the world stands there.

there will still be such a mixture as now we see there is of good and bad in it, *ver. 10.* We long to see all wheat and no tares in God's field, all corn and no chaff in God's floor, but it will not be till the time of ingathering, till the winnowing day comes; both must *grow together until the harvest.* As it has been, so it is, and will be, *the wicked shall do wickedly, but the wise shall understand.* In this as in other things, St. John's Revelation closeth as Daniel did, *Rev. xxii. 11. He which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he which is holy, let him be holy still.*

1. There is no remedy, but that *wicked people will do wickedly*; and such people there are and will be in the world to the end of time. *So said the proverb of the ancients, wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13.* and the observation of the moderns saith the same: *Ill men will do ill things; and a corrupt tree will never bring forth good fruit! do men gather grapes of thorns? or bring forth good things from an evil treasure in the heart? No; wicked practices are the natural products of wicked principles and dispositions. Marvel not at the matter then, Eccl. v. 8.* We are told before that the *wicked will do wickedly*, we can expect no better from them; but which is worse, *none of the wicked shall understand.* This is either, (1.) A part of their *sin*; they *will not understand*, they shut their eyes against the light, and none so blind as they that will not see. Therefore they are *wicked*, because they *will not understand.* If they did but rightly know the truths of God, they would readily obey the laws of God, *Psal. lxxxii. 5.* wilful sin is the effect of willing ignorance; therefore they *will not understand*, because they are *wicked*; therefore they *hate the light*, and come not to the light, *because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19.* Or, (2.) It is a part of their *punishment*; they will do wickedly, and therefore God hath given them up to *blindness of mind*, and has said concerning them, *they shall not understand, nor be converted and healed, Matt. xiii. 14, 15.* God will not *give them eyes to see*, because they will do wickedly, *Deut. xxix. 4.*

2. Yet, as bad as the world is, God will secure to himself a remnant of good people in it; still there shall be *some*, there shall be *many*, to whom the providences and ordinances of God shall be a favour of *life unto life*, while to others they are a favour of *death unto death.*

(1.) The providences of God shall do them good: *many shall be purified and made white, and tried by their troubles, (compare chap. xi. 35) by the same troubles, which will but stir up the corruptions of the wicked, and make them do more wickedly.* Note, The afflictions of good people are designed for their trial; but by these trials they are *purified and made white*; their corruptions are purged out, their graces are brightened, and made both more vigorous and more conspicuous, and are *found to praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7.* Those that are themselves sanctified and good, to them every event is sanctified and works for good, and helps to make them better.

(2.) The word of God shall do them good. When the *wicked understand not*, but stumble at the word, the *wise shall understand.* Those that are *wise in practice*, shall *understand doctrine*, that are influenced and governed by the divine law and love, shall be illuminated with a divine light. For if any man will *do his will*, he shall *know the truth, John vii. 17.* Give instructions to a *wise man*, and he will be yet *wiser.*

4. He must comfort himself with the pleasing prospect of his own happiness in death, in judgment, and to eternity, *ver. 13.* Daniel was now very old, and had been long engaged both in an intimate acquaintance with heaven, and a great deal of public business on this earth. And now he must think of bidding farewell to this present state; *Go thou thy way till the end be.* (1.) It is good for us all to think much of *going away* from this world, we are still *going*, and must be *gone* shortly, gone the way of all the earth: That must be our way; but this is our comfort, we shall not go till God calls for us to another world, and till he has done with us in this world; till he saith, *Go thou thy way*, thou hast finished thy testimony, done thy work, and accomplished as a hireling thy day: therefore now, *Go thou thy way*, and leave it to others to take thy room. (2.) When a good man goes his way from this world, he enters into *rest*; *thou shalt rest from all thy present toils and losses*; and shalt not see the evils that are coming on the next generation. Never could a child of God say more pertinently than in his dying moments, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* (3.) Time and days will have an end; not only our time and days will end very shortly, but all times and days will have an end at length; yet a little while, and time shall be no more; but all its revolutions will be numbered and finished. (4.) Our rest in the grave will be but *till the end of the days*; and then the *peaceful rest* will be happily disturbed by a *joyful resurrection*: Job foresaw this when he said of the dead, that *till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep*; implying that then they shall, *Job xiv. 12.* (5.) We must every one of us *stand in our lot at the end of the days.* In the judgment of the great day, we must have our allotment according to what we were, and what we did in the body; either *Come ye blessed, or go, ye cursed*; and we must *stand forever in that lot.* It was a comfort to Daniel, it is a comfort to all the saints, that whatever their lot is in the days of time, they shall have a happy lot in the *end of the days*, and shall have their *lot among the chosen.* And it ought to be the great care and concern of every one of us to secure a happy lot at last in the *end of the days*, and then we may well be *content with our present lot*, welcome the will of God. (6.) A believing hope and prospect of a blessed lot in the *heavenly Canaan*, at the end of the days will be an effectual support to us when we are going our way out of this world, and will furnish us with living comforts in dying moments.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL.

AN EXPOSITION WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the Book of the PROPHET HOSEA.

WE have now before us, (1.) The twelve minor prophets; which some of the ancients in reckoning up the books of the Old Testament put all together, and reckon but as *one book.* They are called the lesser prophets, not because their writings are of any less authority or usefulness than those of the greater prophets, or as if these prophets were less in God's account, or might be so in ours than the other, but only because they are shorter and less in bulk than the other. We have reason to think that these prophets *preached* as much as the other, but they did not *write* so much, nor is so much of their preaching kept upon record. Many excellent prophets wrote nothing, and others but little, who yet were very useful in their day. And so in the Christian church there have been many burning and shining lights, who, are not known to posterity by their writings, and yet were no way inferior in gifts and graces, and serviceableness to their own generation, than those that are; and some that have left but *little* behind them, and make no great figure among authors, yet were as valuable men as the more voluminous writers. These twelve small prophets, Josephus saith, were put into one volume by the *men of the great synagogue* in Ezra's time, of which learned and pious body of men the three last of these twelve prophets are supposed to have been themselves members. These are what remained of the scattered pieces of inspired writing. Antiquaries value the *fragmenta veterum*; these are the *fragments of prophecy*, which are carefully gathered up by the divine providence and the care of the church, that nothing might be lost; as St. Paul's short epistles, after his long ones. The son of Sirach speaks of these *twelve prophets* with honour, as men that *strengthened Jacob, Ecclef. xlix. 10.* Nine of these prophets prophesied before the captivity, and the three last after the return of the Jews to their own land. Some difference there is in the order of these books. We place them as the ancient Hebrew did; and all agree to put Hosea first; but the ancient Septuagint place the six first in this order, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah; the thing is not material. And if we covet to place them according to their seniority, as to some of them we shall find no certainty. (2.) We have before us the prophecy of Hosea, who was the first of all the writing prophets, somewhat before Isaiah. The ancients say he was of Beth-el, and of the tribe of Issachar. He continued very long a prophet; the Jews reckoned he prophesied near fourscore and ten years; so that as Jerom observes, he prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister-kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed. The style is very concise and sententious above any of the prophets; and in some places it seems to be like the book of proverbs without connection, and rather to be called Hosea's sayings than Hosea's sermons. And a weighty adage may sometimes do more service than a laboured discourse. Huetius observes, that many passages in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to refer to, and to be borrowed from, the prophet Hosea, who wrote a good while before them. As *Jer. vii. 34—xvi. 9.—xxv. 10.—and Ezek. xxvi. 13.* speak the same with *Hos. ii. 11.* so *Ezek. xvi. 16, &c.* is taken from *Hos. ii. 8.* And that promise of *serving the Lord their God, and David their king, Jer. xxx. 8, 9.* Ezek. xxxiv. 23. *Hosea* had before, *chap. iii. 5.* And *Ezek. xix. 12.* is taken from *Hos. xiii. 15.* Thus one prophet confirms and corroborates another; and all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit.

C H A P. I.

The mind of God is revealed to his prophet, and by him to the people, in the three first chapters by signs and types; but afterwards only by discourse. In this chapter we have, (1.) The general title of the whole book, ver. 1. (2.) Some particular instructions he was ordered to give to the people of God. (1.) He must convince them of their sin in going a whoring from God, by marrying a wife of whoredoms, ver. 2, 3. (2.) He must foretell the ruin coming upon them for their sin in the names of his sons, which signified God's disowning and abandoning them, ver. 4, 5, 6—8, 9. (3.) He must speak comfortably to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord, ver. 7. (4.) He must give an intimation of the great mercy God had in store both for Israel and Judah, in the latter days, ver. 10, 11. for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatenings of wrath.

1. **THE** word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Here is, (1.) The prophet's name and surname, which he himself, as the other prophets, prefixeth to his prophecy, for the satisfaction of all, that he is ready to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name, Hosea, or Hoshea, for it is the very same with Joshua's original name, signifies a saviour, for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God, so are faithful ministers, they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. His surname was Ben-Beeri, or the son of Beeri; as with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite. Others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beeri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminency of their parents were such as would derive honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews, that where a prophet's father is named, he also was a prophet. Beeri signifies a well, which may put us in mind of the fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn, and must be continually drawing.

(2.) Here is his authority and commission. *The word of the Lord came to him.* It was to him; it came with power and efficacy to him; it was revealed to him as a real thing, and not a fancy or imagination of his own; in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and wrote, was by divine inspiration; it was by the word of the Lord, as St. Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, 1 *Thess.* iv. 15. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, *Matt.* ii. 15.—ix. 13.—xii. 7. *Rom.* ix. 25, 26. 1 *Pet.* ii. 10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.

(3.) Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied. In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. We have only this general date of his prophecy, and not the date of any particular part of it, as before in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and afterwards in Haggai, and Zechariah. Here is only one king of Israel named, though there were many more within this time, because having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity of naming the other; and they being all wicked he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied, (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him more or less at times throughout all these reigns) it appears,

1. That he prophesied a long time; that he began when he was very young, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness; and that he continued at his work till he was very old, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority. It was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good works and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them that so well knew their state, and naturally cared for it; one they had been long used to, and therefore was the more likely to be useful to them. And yet for ought appears, he did but little good among them; the longer they enjoyed him, the less they regarded him; they despised his youth first, and afterwards his age.

2. That he passed through variety of conditions. Some of these kings were very good, and it is likely countenanced and encouraged him; others very bad, who (we may suppose) frowned upon him and discouraged him; and yet he was still the same. God's ministers must expect to pass through honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, and must resolve in both to hold fast their integrity, and keep close to their work.

3. That he began to prophecy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who fell into the hands of the Lord, before they were turned over into the hands of man; for in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was mentioned, *Zech.* xiv. 5. and *Amos* i. 1. And then was the plague of locusts, *Joel* i. 2, 3. *Amos* vii. 1. *Hos.* iv. 3. The rod of God is sent to enforce the word, and the word of God is sent to explain the rod, yet neither prevail till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

4. That he began to prophecy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as we find 2 *Kings* xiv. 25. He restored the coast of Israel, and God saved him by his hand; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins, and foretells their destruction. Men are not to be flattered in their sinful ways because they prosper in the world, but even then must be faithfully reprov'd, and plainly told that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long if they go on still in their trespasses.

2. The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredoms, departing from the LORD. 3. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim: which conceived, and bare him a son. 4. And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5. And it shall come to pass at that day, that

I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. 6. ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. 7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

These words, *The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea*, may refer either, (1.) To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. At this time there lived and prophesied Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah; but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel; the beginning of this word of the Lord was by him. We read in the history of this Jeroboam here named, 2 *Kings* xiv. 27. that the Lord had not yet said, he would blot out the name of Israel, but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it; which made it so much the harder task to him to be the first that should carry an unpleasant message, and some time before any were raised up to second him. Or rather, (2.) To Hosea's own prophecies. This was the first message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were an evil and an adulterous generation. He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them, till he had gained authority and reputation: and some interest in their affections: No, he must begin with this, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. Nay, he must not only preach this to them, but he must write it and publish it, and leave it upon record as a witness against them. Now here,

1. The prophet must, as it were in a looking-glass, shew them their sin; and shew it them to be exceeding sinful, exceeding hateful. The prophet is ordered to take unto him a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms, ver. 3. And he did so, ver. 4. He married a woman of ill fame, Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; not one that had been married and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandalously in the single state. To marry such a one was not *malum in se*, but only *malum per accidens*, not prudent, decent, or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests, and which if it were really done would be an affliction to the prophet; it is threatened as a curse on Amaziah that his wife should be a harlot, *Amos* vii. 16. but not a sin when God commanded it for an holy end: nay, if commanded, it was his duty, and he must trust God with his reputation. But most think it was done in vision, or that it is no more but a parable; and that was a way of teaching commonly used among the ancients, particularly his prophets; what they meant of others they transferred to themselves in a figure, as St. Paul speaks, 1 *Cor.* iv. 6. He must take a wife of whoredoms, and have such children by her as every one would suspect, though born in wedlock, to be children of whoredoms, begotten in adultery; because it is too common for those that have lived lewdly in the single state, to live no better in the married state. Now (saith God) Hosea, this people is to me such a dishonour, and such a grief and vexation, as a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms would be to thee. For the land has committed great whoredoms. In all instances of wickedness they had departed from the Lord, but their idolatry especially is the whoredom they are here charged with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone, is such an injury and affront to God, as for a wife to embrace the bosom of a stranger is to her husband. It is especially so in those that have made a profession of religion, and have been taken into covenant with God; it is breaking the marriage bond, it is a heinous, odious sin, and as much as any other befores the mind, and takes away the heart. Idolatry is great whoredom, worse than any other; it is departing from the Lord, to whom we lie under greater obligations than any wife doth or can do to a husband. The land has committed whoredom; it is not here and there a particular person that is guilty of idolatry, but the whole land is polluted with it; the sin is become national, the disease epidemical. What an odious thing would it be for the prophet, a holy man, to have a whorish wife, and children whorish like her? What an exercise would it be of his patience, and if she persisted in it, what other could be expected but that he should give her a bill of divorce? And is it not then much more offensive to the holy God to have such a people as this to be called by his name, and have a place in his house; how great is his patience with them! and how justly may he cast them off! It was as if he should have married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who probably was at that time a noted harlot. The land of Israel was like Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; Gomer signifies corruption; Diblaim signifies two cakes or lumps of figs; this notes that Israel was near to ruin, and that their luxury and sensuality was the cause of it. They were as the evil figs, that could not be eaten they were so evil. It speaks sin the daughter of plenty, and destruction the daughter of the abuse of plenty. Some give this sense of the command here given to the prophet, Go, take thee a wife of whoredoms, for if thou shouldest go to seek for an honest modest woman, thou wouldest not find any such, for the whole land and all the people of it is given to whoredom, the usual concomitant of idolatry.

2. The prophet must, as it were through a perspective glass, shew them their ruin; and this he doth in the names given to the children born of this adulteress for as lust when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, so sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

1. He foretells the fall of the royal family in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son; call his name Jezreel, ver. 4. We find that the prophet Isaiah gave prophetic names to his children, *Isa.* vii. 3.—viii. 3. so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies the seed of God; so they should have been; but it signifies also the scattered of God, they shall be as sheep on the mountains that have no shepherd. Call them not Israel, which signifies dominion, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies dispersion, for they that have departed from the Lord will wander endlessly. Hitherto they have been scattered as seed; let them now be scattered as chaff. Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel; it was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city, that this child is called Jezreel, for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Observe here,

1. Who is it that God has a controversy with; it is the house of Jehu, from whom the present king Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarted for the sins of Jehu, for God often lays up men's iniquity for their children, and visits it upon them. It is the kingdom of the house of Israel, which may be meant either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did presently cause to cease, for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, reigned but six months, and he was the last of Jehu's race; or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was made to cease, in the reign of Hoshea about seventy years after; and with God that is but a little while. Note, Neither the

pomp of kings, nor the power of kingdoms, can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

2. What is the ground of this controversy, *I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, i. e. the blood which Jehu shed at Jezreel, when by commission from God, and in obedience to his command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it; with all the worshippers of Baal; God approved of what he did, 2 Kings x. 30. *Thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes*; and yet here God will avenge that blood upon the house of Jehu, when the time is expired during which it was promised his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished? Very justly; the matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and as such it was rewarded; but Jehu did not in a right manner; he aimed at his own advancement, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments with the execution of God's justice. He did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin; for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and took no heed to walk in the law of God, 2 Kings x. 31. And therefore when the measure of the iniquity of his house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is (and being first, it is put for all the rest) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the blood of Jezreel. Thus when the house of Baasha was rooted out, it was because he did like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him, 1 Kings xvi. 7. Note, Those that are intrusted with the administration of justice, are concerned to see to it, that they do it from a right principle and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for another day as little less than murders.

3. How far the controversy shall proceed; it shall be not a correction but a destruction. Some make those words, *I will visit or appoint the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, to signify, not as we read it, the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed; I will punish the house of Jehu, as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed, *I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel*, i. e. I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish. After the death of Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay and dwindled sensibly. And in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened, ver. 5. *I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel; the strength of the warriors of Israel, so the Chaldee.* God will disable them either to defend themselves or to resist their enemies. As the bow abiding in strength and being renewed in the hand, speaks a growing power, so the breaking of the bow speaks a sinking ruined power. The bow shall be broken in the valley of Jezreel, where probably the armoury was; or it may be in that valley some battle was fought, wherein the kingdom of Israel was very much weakened. Note, There is no fence against God's controversy; when he comes forth against a people, their strong bows are soon broken, and their strong-holds broken down. In the valley of Jezreel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; as some notorious malefactors are hanged in chains there where the villany they suffer for was perpetrated; that the punishment may answer the sin.

4. He foretells God's abandoning the whole nation in the name he gives to the second child. This was a daughter as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted their way. Some make it to signify, that Israel grew effeminate, and was thereby enfeebled and made weak. Call the name of this daughter Lo-ruhamah, i. e. not beloved, so it is translated, Rom. ix. 25. or not having obtained mercy, so it is translated, 1 Pet. ii. 10. it comes all to one. This reads the doom of the house of Israel. *I will no more have mercy upon them.* This intimates that God had shewed them great mercy, but they had abused his favours and forfeited them, and now he would shew them favour no more. Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities, have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their lying vanities, Jonah ii. 8. Sin turns away the mercy of God, even from the house of Israel, his own professing people, whose case is sad indeed, when God saith he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, *I will utterly take them away*; will utterly remove them, so some, will utterly pluck them up, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped, we can expect no other but that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon, shall be utterly taken away, as dross and dung. The word for taking away sometimes signifies to forgive sin, and some take it in that sense here. *I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them heretofore*; though God has borne long he will not bear always with a people that hate to be reformed. Or *I will no more have mercy upon them, that I should in any wise pardon them*; or (as our margin reads it) *that I should altogether pardon them.* If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort, *I will no more have mercy upon them till in pardoning I shall pardon them*, i. e. till the Redeemer comes to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldee reads it, but if they repent in pardoning I will pardon them. Even the greatest sinners, if in time they bethink themselves and return, will find that there is forgiveness with God.

5. He must shew them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel, ver. 7. *But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.* Note, Though some are justly cast off for their disobedience, yet God will always secure to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified. And though some through unbelief are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the rejection of Israel, that God will have mercy on Judah, and not on them, and magnifies God's mercy to Judah, that though they also had done wickedly, yet God did not reject them, as he rejected Israel. *I will have mercy upon them, and will save them.* Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now, (1.) This without doubt refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shewed to them and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria, and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem, but God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them by the vast slaughter which an angel made in one night in the camp of the Assyrians; then they were saved by the Lord their God immediately, and not by sword or bow; when the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others, when being utterly taken away, God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them, and after seventy years brought them back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6. *I will save them by the Lord their God*, i. e. by myself. God will be exalted in his own strength, will take the work into his hands; That salvation is sure which he undertakes to be the author of, for if he will work none shall hinder. And

VOL. II. No. CXLIII.*

that salvation is most acceptable which he doth by himself. So the Lord alone did lead him. The less there is of man in any salvation, and the more of God, the brighter it shines, and the sweeter it tastes. I will save them in the word of the Lord, so the Chaldee, for the sake of Christ, the eternal word, and by his power. *I will save them not by bow nor by sword.* That is, (1.) They shall be saved when they are reduced to so low an ebb, that they have neither bow nor sword to defend themselves with, Judg. v. 8. 1 Sam. xiii. 22. (2.) They shall be saved by the Lord then when they are brought off from trusting to their own strength and their weapons of war, Psal. xlv. 6. (3.) They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of sword and bow; Isa. ix. 5. *I will save them by the Lord their God*: In calling him their God, he upbraids the ten tribes who had cast him off from being theirs, for which reason he had cast them off, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them; it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as the Lord their God, and in recompense for their faithful adherence to him and to his word and worship. But, (2.) This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation by the Lord their God, it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by sword or bow. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was utterly taken away under Hoshea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved; and in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity. (3.) Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation which, in the fulness of time, was to be wrought out by the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save the people from their sins.

8. ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9. Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. 10. ¶ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God. 11. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

We have heard a prediction,

1. Of the rejection of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea had by his adulterous spouse, ver. 8, 9. And still we must observe, that those children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel were all children of subornation, ver. 2. all born of that harlot that Hosea married, to intimate, that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first revolted from God, they had never been rejected by him; God never leaves any till they first leave him.

Here is, 1. The birth of this child. When she had weaned her daughter, she conceived and bare a son. Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain preface of their utter rejection, to intimate God's patience with them, and his loathsomeness to proceed to extremity. Some think her bearing another son signifies that people's persisting in their wickedness, lust still conceived and brought forth sin; they added to do evil, so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it; they were old in adulteries and obstinate.

2. The name given him. Call him Lo-ammi, i. e. not my people. When they were told that God would no more have mercy on them, they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this conceit that they were God's people, whom he could not but have mercy on. And therefore here he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them, ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. I will not be yours, so the word is; I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be your king, your father, your patron and protector; we supply it very well with that which includes all, I will not be your God. I will not be to you what I have been, nor what you plainly expect I should be, nor what I would have been if you had kept close to me. Observe, You are not my people, i. e. you do not carry it as becomes my people, you are not observant of me, and obedient to me as my people should be; you are not my people, but the people of this and the other dunghill deity, and therefore I will not own you for my people, will not protect you, will not put in any claim to you, not demand you, nor deliver you out of the hands of those that have seized you; let them take you, you are none of mine; you will not have me to be your God, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore I will not be your God; you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit by me. Note, Our being taken into covenant with God, is owing purely to him and to his grace, for then it begins on his side, I will be to them a God, and then they shall be to me a people; we love him, because he first loved us; but our being cast out of covenant, is owing purely to ourselves and our own folly. The breach is on man's side; you are not my people, and therefore I will not be your God; if God hate any, it is because they first hated him. This was fulfilled in Israel when they were utterly taken away into the land of Assyria, and their place knew them no more. They were no longer God's people, for they lost their knowledge and worship of him; no prophets were sent them, no promises made them as were to the two tribes in their captivity; nay, they were no longer a people, but for ought appears were mingled with the nations into which they were carried and lost among them.

3. Of the reduction and restoration of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath, the rejection as it shall not be total, so it shall not be final, ver. 10, 11. yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea. See how the same hand that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has torn binds up; though God cause grief by his threatenings, yet he will have compassion, and will gather with everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises that are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, and took the benefit of the liberty which Cyrus proclaimed; came up in great numbers out of the several countries unto which they were dispersed to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two distinct nations. And in their own land where God had by his prophets disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them.

them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country that shall come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think, that though this promise has a further reference, yet it was graciously intended and piously used for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy God had in store for them and their land; their nation could not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in it, was in reserve for it.

2. Some think these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not *in full*, till the general conversion of the Jews, in the latter days, which is expected yet to come. When the vast incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ, and be incorporated in the gospel church. Then, and not till then God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by St. Paul, *Rom. ix. 25, 26.* and by St. Peter when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, *1 Pet. ii. 10.* Israel here is the gospel church, the spiritual Israel, *Gal. vi. 16.* all believers who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing of the faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, *Rom. iv. 11, 12.* Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel.

1. That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased; it shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered. Though Israel according to the flesh be diminished and made few, the spiritual Israel shall be numerous, shall be innumerable. In the vast multitudes that by the preaching of the gospel have been brought to Christ, both in the first ages of Christianity and ever since, this promise is fulfilled. Thousands out of every tribe of Israel, and out of other nations, a multitude which no man can number, *Rev. vii. 4-9.* *Gal. iv. 27.* in this the promise made to Abraham, when God called him Abraham the high father of a multitude, had its full accomplishment, *Gen. xvii. 5.* and that *Gen. xxii. 17.* Some observe, that they are here compared to the sand of the sea, not only for their numbers, but as the sand of the sea serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments; God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

2. That God will renew his covenant with the gospel Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, by as full and ample a charter as that whereby the Old Testament church was incorporated, nay, and its privileges shall be much greater. In the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people*, there shall ye be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people. The abandoned Gentiles in their respective places, and the rejected Jews in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed. There were the fathers were cast off for their unbelief, the children upon their believing shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of those the people of God that were not a people. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged, now it is not only *ye are my people*, as formerly, but *ye are the sons of the living God*, whether by birth ye were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was God's son, his first born, but then they were as children under age, but now under the gospel they were grown up both to greater understanding and greater liberty, *Gal. iv. 1, 2.* Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers, that they have the living God for their Father, the ever-living God, and may look upon themselves as his children by grace and adoption. 2. The sonship of believers shall be owned and acknowledged: it shall be said to them for their comfort and satisfaction, nay, and it shall be said for their honour in the hearing of the world, *Ye are the sons of the living God.* Let not the saints disquiet themselves, let not others despise them, for sooner or later there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the world shall be made to know their excellency, and the value God has for them. 3. It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place where they had lain long under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles that they needed not go up to Jerusalem to be received and owned as God's children, no, they may stay where they are, and in that place, though it be in the remotest corner of the earth; in that place, where they were at a distance, where it was said to them, *you are not God's people*, but are separated from them (*Isa. lvi. 3-6.*) even there, without leaving your country and kindred, you may by faith receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with your spirits, that you are the children of God.

3. That those who had been at variance should be happily brought together, *ver. 11.* Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel be gathered together. This uniting of Judah and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned only as a specimen, or one instance of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been at the greatest enmity one against another, to a good understanding one of another, and a good affection one to another. This was literally fulfilled, when the Galileans who inhabited that part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, and probably for the most part were descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were properly called Jews, (that were of Judea) in following Christ and embracing his gospel: and his first disciples were partly Jews and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the gospel, were of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, *Matt. iv. 15.* and though there was no good will at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet upon their believing in Christ they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former disaffection they had to one another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, though between them and the Jews there was a much greater enmity, yet in Christ there was a perfect unanimity, *Acts viii. 14.* Thus Judah and Israel were gathered together; yet this was but a type of the much more celebrated coalition between Jews and Gentiles, when by the death of Christ, the partition-wall of the ceremonial law was taken down. See *Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16.* Christ died to gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad, *John xi. 52.* *Eph. i. 10.*

4. That Jesus Christ should be the center of unity to all God's spiritual Israel. They shall all agree to appoint to themselves one head, which can be no other but he whom God hath appointed, even Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one only head of it; not only a head of government as of the body politic, but a head of vital influence as of the natural body. To believe in Christ is to appoint him to ourselves for our head, i. e. to consent to God's appointment, and willingly to commit ourselves to his guidance and government; and this in concurrence and communion with all good Christians that make him their head; so that though they are many, yet in him they are one, and so become one with each other; *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt.*

5. That having appointed Christ for their head they shall come up out of the

land, i. e. they shall come some of all sorts, from all parts to join themselves to the church, as under the Jewish economy they came up from all corners of the land of Israel to Jerusalem to worship, *Psal. cxxxii. 4.* Thither the tribes go up: to which there is a plain allusion in that prophecy of the accession of the Gentiles to the church, *Isa. ii. 3.* Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. It speaks not a local remove, for they are said to be in the same place, *ver. 10.* but a change of their mind, a spiritual ascent to Christ. They shall come up from the earth, so it may be read; for those that have given up themselves to Christ as their head, take their affections off from this earth, and the things of it, to set them upon things above, *Col. iii. 1, 2.* for they are not of the world, *John xv. 19.* but have their conversation in heaven. They shall come up out of the land, though it be the land of their nativity, they shall in affection come out from it, that they may follow the lamb whithersoever he goes. Thus the Learned Dr. Pocock takes it.

6. That when all this comes to pass, Great shall be the day of Jezreel. Though great is the day of Jezreel's affliction, so some understand it, yet great shall be the day of Jezreel's glory. This shall be Israel's day; the day shall be their own, after their enemies have long had their day. Israel is here called Jezreel, the seed of God, the holy seed, *Isa. vi. 13.* the substance of the land; this seed is now sown in the earth, and buried under the clouds; but great shall be its day when the harvest comes. Great was the church's day when there were added to it daily such as should be saved; then did the Almighty do great things for it.

CHAP. II.

The scope of this chapter seems to be much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and to point at the same events, and the causes of them. As there, so here, (1.) God by the prophet discovers sin to them, and chargeth it home upon them, the sin of their idolatry, their spiritual whoredoms, their serving idols, and forgetting God, and their obligations to him, *ver. 1, 2, 5-8.* (2.) He threatens to take away from them that plenty of all good things with which they had served their idols, and to abandon them to ruin without remedy, *ver. 3, 4, 6, 7-9-13.* (3.) Yet he promiseth at last to return in ways of mercy to them for his own sake, *ver. 14.* to restore them to their former plenty, *ver. 15.* to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, *ver. 16, 17.* to renew his covenant with them, *ver. 18-20.* and to bless them with all good things, *ver. 21-23.*

1. SAY ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. 2. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts: 3. Left I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. 4. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. 5. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread, and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

The first words of this chapter some make the close of the foregoing chapter, and add it to the promises which we have here of the great things God would do for them; when they shall have appointed Christ their head, and entered in him, then let them say to one another with triumph and exultation. Let the prophets say it to them, so the Chaldee. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, is now their commission; say to them Ammi, and Ruhamah, call them so again, for they shall no longer lie under the reproach and doom of Lo-ammi and Lo ruhamah; they shall now be my people again and obtain mercy. God's spiritual Israel, made up of Jews and Gentiles without distinction, shall call one another brethren and sisters, shall own one another for the people of God and beloved by him, and for that reason shall embrace one another, and stir up one another both to give thanks for, and to walk worthy of this common salvation which they partake of. Or rather, because the following words seem to have a coherence with these, these also are designed for conviction and humiliation. The mother, *ver. 2.* seems to be the same with the brethren and sisters, *ver. 1.* the church of the ten tribes, the body of the people, which were brethren, and in a special manner with the heads and leaders, which were as the mother by whom the rest were brought up and nursed. But who are the children that must plead with their mother thus? Either, (1.) The godly that were among them, that witnessed against the iniquities of the times, let them boldly go on to bear their testimony against the idolatries and gross corruptions that prevail among them. Let them that had not bowed the knee to Baal reason the case with those that had, and endeavour to convince them with such arguments as are here put in their mouths. Note, Private persons may and ought in their places to appear and plead against the public profanations of God's name and worship. Children may humbly and modestly argue with their parents, when they do amiss. Plead with your mother, plead, as Jonathan with Saul concerning David. Or, (2.) The sufferers that were among them that shared in the calamities of the times, let them not complain of God, let them not quarrel with him, or lay the blame on him, as if he had dealt hardly with them, and not like a tender father, no let them plead with their mother, and lay the fault on her, where it ought to be laid; compare *Isa. i. 1.* For her transgressions is your mother put away, she may thank herself, and you may thank her for all your miseries. Let us see now how they must plead with her.

1. They must put her in mind of the relation wherein she had stood to God, the kindness he had had for her, the many favours he had bestowed upon her, and the further favours he had designed her. Let them tell their brethren and sisters that they had been Ammi and Ruhamah, they had been God's people and vessels of his mercy, and might have been so still, if it had not been their own fault, *ver. 1.* Note, Our relation to God and dependence on him, is a great aggravation of our revolts from him and rebellions against him.

2. They must in God's name charge her with the violation of the marriage-covenant between her and God: let them tell her that God doth not look upon her as his wife, nor upon himself as her husband any longer. Tell her, *ver. 2.* that she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; that by her spiritual whoredom, she has forfeited all the honour and comfort of her relation to God, and provoked him to give her a bill of divorce. Note, No

No consideration can be more powerful to awaken us to repentance, than the provocation we have by sin given to God to disown and cast us off. It is time to look about us, and to think what course we must take when God threatens to reject us; for woe unto us if he be not *our husband*. They must charge this home upon her, *ver. 5. Their mother has played the harlot; their congregation hath run a whoring after false prophets, to the Chaldee, or rather after idols, wherein they were encouraged by their false prophets; she that conceived them hath done shamefully, in making and worshipping idols.* An idol is called a *shame*, chap. ix. 10. and idolatry is a *shameful thing*. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to *fall down to the stock of a tree*, as the prophet speaks; or it notes not only that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush; *Jer. vi. 15. Or she has made upbanded, has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children are ashamed of their relation to her.*

3. They must upbraid her with her horrid ingratitude to God her benefactor, in ascribing to her idols the glory of the gifts he had given her, and then giving that for a reason why she paid them the homage due to him only, *ver. 5. In this she did shamefully, indeed that she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water.* Observe here, (1.) Her wicked resolution to persist in idolatry, notwithstanding all that God said both by his prophets and by his providences to draw her from it; *she said* Whatever is offered to the contrary, *I will go after my lovers*: or, *Those that cause me to love them, whom I cannot but be in love with.* The Chaldees understand it of the nations whose alliance Israel courted and depended upon: who supplied them with what they needed. But it is rather to be understood of the idols they worshipped; to justify their love of which they called them *their lovers*. See who do *shamefully*, those that are wilful and resolute in sin; and those that openly profess and own their resolution to go on in it. See the folly of idolaters to call those their *lovers* that had not so much as life; yet let us learn to call *our God our lover*; let us keep up good thoughts of him, and put a high value upon our interest in him and in his love. (2.) The gross mistake upon which this resolution was grounded; *I will go after my lovers, because they give me my bread and my water, which are necessary to sustain the body, my wool and my flax, which are necessary to clothe the body, and pleasant things, my oil, and my drink, my liquors, so the word is, wine and strong drink.* Note, (1.) The things of sense are the best things with carnal hearts, and the most powerful attractions, and in pursuit of which they care not what they follow after. The God of Israel set before them his *sentences and judgments*, Deut. iv. 6. *more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey*, Psal. xix. 10. promised them his favour, which would put gladness into their hearts *more than corn, wine, and oil*, Psal. iv. 7. But they had no relish at all of these things; whence they thought their *oil* and their *drink* came, thither they would return their best affections. *O curvæ in terram animæ & cælestium inanes!* 2. It is a great abuse and injury to God, in pursuance of the pleasures and delights of sense to forsake him, who not only gives us *better things*, but gives us even *these things too*. The idolaters made Ceres the goddess of their corn, Bacchus the God of their wine, &c. and then foolishly fancied they had their corn and wine from these, forgetting the Lord their God, who both gave them that good land, and gave them power to get wealth out of it. 3. Many are hardened in sin by their worldly prosperity; they had an abundance of those things when they served their idols, and then imagined them to be given them by their idols, which kept them to their service; thus they argued, *Jer. xlii. 17, 18. while we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, we had plenty of victuals.*

4. They must persuade her to repent and reform; God will disown her if she persist in her whoredoms, *let her therefore put away her whoredoms, ver. 2.* Let her be convinced that it is possible she may reform; the idols, as dear as they are, may yet be *parted with*, and it will certainly be well with her if she do reform. Note, Our pleading with sinners must be to drive them to repentance, not to drive them to despair. Let her put away her whoredoms, and her adulteries, the doubling of the words to the same purpose, and both plural, notes the abundance of idolatries they were guilty of, all which must be abandoned, ere God should be reconciled to them. Let her put them out of her sight, as detestable things which she cannot endure to look upon, let her say unto them, *Get ye hence, Isa. xxx. 22.* Let her put them from her face, and from between her breasts, i. e. Let her not do as harlots use to do, that both discover their own wicked disposition, and allure others to wickedness, by painting their faces, and exposing their naked breasts and adorning them; let her not thus, by annexing all possible gaieties and pleasures to the worship of idols, engage herself, and allure others to it. Let her put away all these. Every sinful course persisted in is an adulterous departure from God. And here we may see what it is truly to repent of it and turn from it. (1.) True penitents will forsake both open sins and secret sins; will put away not only the whoredoms that lie in sight, but those that lie in secret between their breasts; the sin that is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) They will both avoid the outward occasions of sin, and mortify the inward disposition to it. Idolaters walked after their own eyes, which went a whoring after their idols. *Ezek. vi. 9. Deut. iv. 19.* and therefore they must put them away out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them: *Look not upon the vine when it is red.* But that is not enough, the ax must be laid to the root, the corrupt bent and inclination of the heart must be changed, and it must be put away from between the breasts, that Christ alone may have the innermost and uppermost place there, *1 Cor. i. 13.*

5. They must shew her the utter ruin that will certainly be the fatal consequence of her sin, if she do not repent and reform, *ver. 3. Lest I strip her naked.* This comes in here not by way of sentence passed upon her, but by way of warning given to her, that she may prevent it. Let her put away her whoredoms, that I may not strip her naked, so it may be read; intimating, that God waits to shew mercy to sinners, if they would but qualify themselves for that mercy. It is here threatened, that God will deal with her as the just and jealous husband at length doth with an adulterous wife, that hath filled his house with a *spurious brood*, and will not be reclaimed, he turns her and her children out of doors, and sends them a begging. *I will not have mercy upon her children, ver. 4. the particular persons that share in the calamity of the nation, and the rising generation shall be ruined by it, for they are children of whoredoms, and keep up the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers.* Now it is here threatened that they shall be both *stript and starved*; they thought their idols gave them *their bread and their water, their wool and their flax*; but God, by taking them away, will let them know that it was he that gave them.

1. She shall be *stript*. Lest I strip her of all her ornaments which she is proud of, and with which she courts her lovers; strip her, and set her as in the day that she was born, i. e. send her as naked out of the world as she came into it; this death doth, *Job. i. 21. I will strip her, and so expose her to cold, and expose her to shame, and justly is she exposed to shame that did shamefully, ver. 5.* The day when God brought them out of Egypt, where they were no better than slaves and beggars, was the day in which they were born; and God threatens to bring them back to as low and miserable a condition as he then found them in. Whatever they had that either gained

them respect, or screened them from contempt among their neighbours, should be taken from them. See *Ezek. xvi. 4-39.*

2. She shall be *starved*; shall be deprived not only of her honours, but of her comforts and necessary supports. She shall be *starved*, shall be made as a *wilderness* and a *dry land*, and *stain with thirst*. She that boasted so much of her bread and water, her oil, and her drinks which her lovers had given her, shall not have so much as *necessary food*. The land shall not afford subsistence for the inhabitants, for want of the rain of heaven; or if it do, it shall be taken from them by the enemy, so that the rightful owners shall perish for want of it. Some understand it thus; *I will make her as she was in the wilderness, and set her as she was in the desert land, where she was sometimes ready to perish for thirst.* So it explains the former part of the verse, *I will set her as in the day that she was born*, for it was in the vast howling wilderness that Israel was first formed into a people. They shall be in as deplorable condition as their fathers were whose carcases fell in the wilderness, and in this respect worse, that then the children were referred to be heirs of the land of promise, but now, *I will not have mercy upon her children, for their mother hath played the harlot.*

6. ¶ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. 7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now. 8. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oyl, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. 9. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. 10. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. 11. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new-moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. 12. And I will destroy her vines, and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burnt incense to them, and she decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

God here goes on to threaten what he would do with this treacherous idolatrous people; and therefore he *warns* that he may not *wound*, therefore he *threatens* that he may not *strike*. If he turn not, he will *whet his sword*, *Psal. vii. 12.* but if he turn he will *sheathe* it. They did not turn, and therefore all this came upon them; and it being threatened before, shews that it was the execution of a divine sentence upon them for their wickedness; and it is written for admonition to us.

1. They shall be perplexed and embarrassed in all their counsels, and disappointed in all their expectations. This is threatened, *ver. 6, 7.* But to the threatening is annexed a promise, that this shall be a means to convince them of their folly, and bring them home to their duty; and so good shall be brought out of evil, in token of mercy God has yet in reserve for them. And this being the happy fruit and effect of the distress, it is hard to say whether the prediction or the distress itself should be called a threatening or a promise.

1. God will raise up difficulties and troubles in their way; so that their public counsels and affairs should have no success, nor shall they be able to get forward in them. *I will hedge up thy way with thorns*, i. e. with such crosses as like thorns and briars are the product of sin and the curse, and are scratching and tearing and vexing; and when the way we are in is hedged up with them, stop our progress and force us to turn back. She said, *I will go after my lovers, I will pursue my leagues and alliances with foreign powers, and depend upon them; but God faith, she shall be frustrated in these projects, and not be able to proceed in them. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and if that do not serve, I will make a wall.* If some lesser difficulties be got over, and prevail not to break thy measures, God will raise greater, for he will overcome when he judgeth. It shall be such a hedge and such a wall, as that she shall not find her paths. The change of the person here, I will hedge up thy way, and then she shall not find it, is usual in scripture, especially in an earnest way of speaking: Sinner, do thou take notice, *I will hedge up thy way*, and all you that are by-standers, take notice what will be the effect of this, you may observe that she cannot find her paths; she shall be as a traveller that not only knows not which way to go of many that are before him, but that finds no way at all to go forward. And then she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them, shall endeavour to make an interest in the Assyrians and Egyptians, and to have them for her protectors: But she shall not gain her point; they shall either not come into confederacy with her or do her no service, shall help in vain, and be as the *stuff of a broken reed*. She shall seek them but shall not find them, shall seek to her idols, but shall not find that satisfaction in them that she promised herself; the gods whom she trusted and courted not only can do nothing for her, but have nothing to say to her to encourage her. Now, (1.) This is such a just judgment as the Sodomites met with that were *struck with blindness*, and *wearied themselves to find the door*, Gen. xix. 11. and the Syrians, 2 Kings vi. 18. Note, Those that are most resolute in their sinful pursuits, are commonly most crossed in them. *Thorns and snares are in the way of the forward*, Prov. xxii. 5. and thus with them God shews himself forward, *Psal. xviii. 26. and walks contrary to those who walk contrary to him*, Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. The lamenting prophets complains, *he hath enclosed my ways*, Lam. iii. 7, 9. The way of God and duty is often hedged about with thorns, but we have reason to think it is a sinful way that is hedged up with thorns. (2.) This is such a kind rebuke, and indeed such a mercy as Baalim met with; when the angel stood in his way to hinder his going forward to curse Israel, Numb. xxii. 22. Note, Crosses and obstacles in an evil course are great blessings, and are so to be accounted; they are God's hedges to keep us from transgressing; to restrain us from wandering out of the green pastures, to withdraw man for his purpose, Job xxxiii. 17. to make the way of sin difficult that we may not go on in it, and to keep us from it whether we will

will or not. We have reason to bless God both for restraining grace, and for restraining providences.

2. These difficulties that God raiseth up in their way shall raise up in their minds thoughts of turning back. *Then shall she say, since I cannot overtake my lovers, I will even go and return to my first husband, i. e. will return to God, and humble myself to him, and desire him to take me in again, for when I kept close to him it was every way better with me than now.* Two things are here extorted from this degenerate apostate people.

(1.) A just acknowledgment of the folly of their apostasy: They are now brought to own that it was *better with them* while they kept close to their God than ever it was since they forsook him. Note, Whoever have exchanged the service of God for the service of the world and the flesh, have sooner or later been made to own that they *changed for the worse*; and that while they continued in good company, and went on in the way of good duties, and made conscience how they spent their time, and what they said or did, it was better with them, they had more true comfort and enjoyment of themselves than ever they had since they went astray. (2.) A good purpose to come back again to their duty; *I will go and return to my first husband*; and she knows so much of his goodness and readiness to forgive, that she speaks without any doubt of his receiving her again into favour, and making her condition as good as ever. Note, The disappointments we meet with in our pursuits of satisfaction in the creature, should, if nothing else will do it, drive us at length to the Creator, in whom alone it is to be had. When Moab is *wary of the high place*, he shall go to the *sanctuary*, Isa. xvi. 12. And when the prodigal son is reduced to husks, short allowance indeed, and remembers that *in his father's house there is bread enough*, then he saith, *I will arise, and go to my father's house*, Luke xv. 17, 18.

2. The necessary supports and comforts of life shall be taken from them, because they had dishonoured God with them, *ver. 8, 9.* Their land was plenteous. Now see here,

1. How graciously their plenty was given to them. God gave them not only corn for necessity, but wine for delight, and oil for ornament. Nay, he multiplied their silver and gold, wherewith to traffick with other nations, and bring home their products; and which they might hoard up for posterity; silver and gold will keep longer than corn, and wine, and oil. He gave them wool and flax too, to cover their nakedness, and to serve for ornament enough to them, Ezek. xvi. 10. Now, God is a bountiful benefactor, even to those who he foresees will be ungrateful and unthankful to him.

2. How basely their plenty was abused by them. (1.) They robbed God of the honour of his gifts. *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, i. e. she did not remember it.* The law and the prophets had told them again and again that all their comforts they received from God's bountiful providence: but they were so often told by their false prophets and idolatrous priests that they had their corn from such an idol, and their wine from such an idol, &c. that they had quite forgot their relation to their great benefactor, and their obligations to him. She did not consider it, she would not acknowledge it; this they were willingly ignorant of, and more brutish than the ox that knows his owner, and the ass that knows his master's crib. *She did not know it, for she did not return thanks to him for his gifts, nor study what she should render; nor did she give him his dues out of them, and so carried it as if she were ignorant who was the donor.* (2.) They served and honoured his enemies with them. They prepared them for Baal; they adorned their images with gold and silver, Jer. x. 4. and adorned themselves for the worship of their images, *ver. 13.* See Ezek. xvi. 17, 18, 19. *Wherewith they made Baal*, for the margin reads it, i. e. the image of Baal. Note, It is a very great dishonour to the God of heaven to make those gifts of his providence the food and fuel of our lusts, which he gave for our support, in his service, and to be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

3. How justly their plenty should be taken from them. *Therefore will I return, I will alter my dealings with them, will take another course, and will take away my corn, and other good things that I gave her.* I will recover it; a law-term; as a man by due course of law recovers what is unjustly detained from him; or, as when the tenant has committed waste, the landlord recovers *locum vastatum*. Observe, God calls it *my corn and my wine, my wool, and my flax*; they called it their's, *my bread and my water*, *ver. 5.* but God lets them know they were not their's, he only allowed them the use of them as tenants, intrusted them with the management of them as stewards, but still reserved the property in himself; it is *my corn, and my wine*. Note, God will have us to know, not only that we have all our creature-comforts and enjoyments from him, but that he has still an incontestible right and title to them, that they are more his than our's, and therefore are to be used for him, and accounted for to him. He will therefore take it away from them, because they have forfeited it by disowning his right; as a tenant by copy of court-roll, who holds at the will of his lord, forfeits his estate if he makes a feoffment of it as though he were a freeholder. He will recover it, will free or deliver it, that it may be no longer abused; as the creature is said to be *delivered from the bondage of corruption*, under which it groans, Rom. viii. 21. He will take it away in the time thereof and in the season thereof, then when they expected it, and thought they were sure of it: It shall suffer shipwreck in the harbour; and the harvest shall be a heap. He will take it away by unreasonable weather, or by unreasonable men. Note, Those who abuse the mercies God gives them to his dishonour, cannot expect to enjoy them long.

3. They shall lose all their honour, and be exposed to contempt. *Ver. 10. I will discover her lewdness, i. e. will bring to light all her secret wickedness, and make it public to her shame; I will shew by the punishment of it how heinous, how odious, how offensive it is.* The fact has been denied, but now it shall appear; the fault has been diminished, but now it shall appear exceeding sinful. And this in the sight of her lovers, i. e. in the sight of the neighbour nations with whom she courted an alliance, and on whom she had a dependance; they shall despise her, and be ashamed of her, because of her weakness, and poverty, and ill conduct; they shall not think her any longer worthy of their friendship. See this fulfilled, I am. i. 8. *All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness.* Or in the sight of the sun and moon, which she worshipped as her lovers, before them shall her lewdness be discovered. Compare this with Jer. viii. 1, 2. *They shall bring out the bones of their kings and princes, and spread them before the sun and moon, whom they have loved and served.* Note, Sin will have shame, let those expect it that have done shamefully. What other lot can this impudent adulteress expect but that of a common whore, to be carted through the town? And when God comes to deal thus with her, none shall deliver her out of his hands; neither the gods nor the men they confide in. Note, Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy, cannot be delivered out of the hand of his justice.

4. They shall lose all their pleasure, and shall be left melancholy. *Ver. 11. I will cause her mirth to cease.* It seems then, though they had gone a whoring from their God, yet they could find in their hearts to rejoice as other people, which is forbidden, chap. ix. 1. Many who lie under

guilt and wrath, are yet very jocund and merry, and live jovially; but whether in their laughter their hearts be sad or no, it is certain the end of their mirth will be heaviness; for God will cause all their mirth to cease. It is as Mr. Burroughs observes here, *sin and mirth can never hold long together; but if men will not take away sin from their mirth, God will take away mirth from their sin.*

(1.) God will take away the occasions of their sacred mirth; *their feast-days, their new moons, their sabbaths, and all their solemn feasts.* These God instituted to be observed in a religious manner, and they were to be observed with rejoicing; and it seems though they had departed from the pure worship of God, yet they kept up the observance of these; not at God's temple at Jerusalem, for they had long since forsaken that, but probably at Dan and Bethel, where the calves were, or in some other places of meeting that they had. They observed them not for the honour of God, or with any true devotion towards him, but only because they were times of mirth and feasting, music, and dancing, and meeting of friends, received by tradition from their fathers. Thus, when they had lost the power of godliness and denied that, yet for the pleasing of a vain and carnal mind, they kept up the form of it; and by this means their new moons and their sabbaths became an iniquity, which God could not away with, Isa. i. 13. Now observe, (1.) God calls them *their new moons, and their sabbaths*, not his, he disowns them, but *their's*. (2.) He will cause them to cease. Note, When men by their sins have caused the life and substance of ordinances to cease, it is just with God by his judgments to cause the remaining shew and shadow of them to cease.

(2.) He will take away the supports of their carnal mirth. They loved the new moons and the sabbaths only for the sake of good cheer that was stirring then, not for the sake of any religious exercises then performed, these they had dropped long ago; and now God will take away their provisions for these solemnities; *ver. 12. I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees.* Note, If men destroy God's word and ordinances, by which he should be honoured on their feast-days, it is just with him to destroy their vines and fig-trees, with which they used to regale themselves. While they took the pleasure of these they gave their lovers the praise of them, *These are my rewards, which my lovers have given me; I may thank my stars for these, and my worship of them; I may thank my neighbours for these, and my alliance with them.* And therefore God will destroy them, will wither them with a blast, or bring in a foreign enemy that shall lay the country waste, so that their vineyards shall become a forest; the inclosures shall be thrown down, as is usual in war, all shall be laid in common, so that the beasts of the field shall eat their grapes and their figs. Or they shall be so blasted with the east-wind, that fruit-trees shall be of no more use than forest-trees; but being withered and good for nothing, what fruit there is shall be left to the beasts of the field. Or it shall be devoured by their enemies, by men as barbarous as wild beasts.

Now, (1.) This shall be the ruin of their mirth. God will cause all her mirth to cease: How will he do it? Taking away their new moons and the sabbaths will not do it, they can very easily part with them, and find no loss; but I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees; will take away her sensual pleasures, and then she will think herself undone indeed. Note, The destruction of the vines and the fig-trees causeth all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease; it will say as Micah, you have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

(2.) This shall be the punishment of her idolatry. *Ver. 13. I will visit upon her the days of Baalam, i. e. I will reckon with her for all the worship of all the Baals they have made gods of, from the days of their fathers unto this day.* We read of their worshipping Baal as long ago as the time of the judges, and for aught I know this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalam; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and justly is that sin so visited more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription and long usage. Now the measure of the iniquity of Israel was full, all their former sins came into the account, and shall be required of this generation. Or the days of Baalam are the solemn festival days which they kept in honour of their idols. Days of sinful mirth may be visited in days of mourning. These were the days wherein she burnt incense to idols; and to grace the solemnity decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels; that appearing honourable the honour she did to Baal might be thought the greater. Or she was as a wife that decks herself with the ear-rings and jewels that her husband gave her to make herself amiable to her lovers, whom she follows after, and is ever mindful of: But she forgot me, saith the Lord. Note, Our treacherous departures from God are owing to our forgetfulness of him, of his nature and attributes, his relation to us, and our obligations to him. Many that plead they have weak memories, and forget the things of God, yet can remember other things well enough; nay, it is because they are so mindful of lying vanities that they are so forgetful of their own mercies.

14. ¶ Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ithi; and shall call me no more Baali. 17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. 18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and I will make them to lie down safely. 19. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercy. 20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; 22. And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil: and they shall hear Jezreel. 23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon

upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were not my people, Thou art my people*; and they shall say, *Thou art my GOD*.

The state of Israel ruined by their own sin, did not look so black and dismal in the former part of the chapter, but that the state of Israel restrained by the divine grace, looks as bright and pleasant here in the latter part of the chapter; and the more surprisingly so, as the promises follow thus close upon the threatenings; nay, which is very strange, they are by a note of connexion joined to and inferred from that declaration of their sinfulness upon which the threatenings of their ruin are grounded; *She went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord; therefore I will allure her*. Fitly therefore is that *therefore*, which is the note of connexion, immediately followed with a note of admiration, *Behold, I will allure her!* When it was said, *She forgot me*, one would think it should have followed, therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more; no, *therefore I will allure her*. Note, God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above our's; his reasons are all fetched from within himself, and not from any thing in us; nay, his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious, *Iſa. lvi. 17, 18. Therefore because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy*. Some think it may be translated *afterwards or nevertheless, I will allure her*. It comes all to one; the design is plainly to magnify free-grace to those on whom God will have mercy purely for mercy's sake.

Now that which is here promised to Israel is,

1. That though now they were disconsolate and ready to despair, they should again be revived with comforts and hopes, *ver. 14, 15*. This is expressed here with an allusion to God's dealings with that people when he brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to Canaan; as their forlorn and deplorable condition in their captivity was compared to their state in Egypt in the day that they were born, *ver. 3*. They shall be *new formed* by such miracles of love and mercy as they were *first formed*; and such a transport of joy shall they be in as they were in then. It is hard to say when this had its accomplishment in the kingdom of the ten tribes; but it principally aims, no doubt, at the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles into the church by the gospel of Christ; and it is applicable, nay we have reason to think it was designed that it should be applied to the conversion of particular souls to God. Now observe,

1. The gracious methods God will take with them. (1.) He will bring them into the wilderness, as he did at first when he brought them out of Egypt, where he instructed them, and took them into covenant with himself. The land of their captivity shall be to them now as that wilderness was then, the furnace of affliction, in which God will choose them. See *Ezek. xx. 35, 36. I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you*. God had said he would make them as a wilderness, *ver. 3*, which was a threatening, now when it is here made part of a promise that he would bring them into the wilderness, the meaning may be, that he would by his grace bring their minds to their condition, they shall have humble hearts under humbling providences; being poor, shall be poor in spirit, shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity, and then they are prepared to have comfort spoken to them. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt he led them into the wilderness, to humble them and prove them, that he might do them good, *Deut. viii. 2, 3, 15, 16*. and so he will do again. Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for he first brings into a wilderness; into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world; into distress of mind through sense of guilt and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself and bewildered, and by those convictions he prepares for consolations; and sometimes into outward distress and trouble, by that to open the ear to discipline. (2.) He will then allure them, and speak comfortably to them; will persuade them, and speak to their hearts; i. e. he will by his word and Spirit incline their hearts to return to him, and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of his favour, as before he had terrified them with the threatenings of his wrath; will speak friendly to them, both by his prophets and by his providences, as before he had spoken roughly, *Iſa. xl. 1, 2. By the hand of my servants the prophets I will speak comfort to her heart; so the Chaldee*. This refers to the gospel of Christ and the offers of divine grace in the gospel, by which we are allured to forsake our sins, and to turn to God: and which speaks to the heart of a convinced sinner, that which is every way suited to his case; speaks abundant consolation to those that sorrow for sin, and lament after the Lord. And when by the Spirit it is indeed spoken to the heart effectually, and so as to reach the conscience, (which it is God's prerogative to do) O what a blessed change is wrought by it! Note, The best way of reducing wandering souls to God is by fair means. By the promise of rest in Christ we are invited to take his yoke upon us; and the work of conversion may be forwarded by comforts as well as by convictions. (3.) He will give her her vineyards from thence; from that time, and from that place where he hath afflicted her, and brought her to see her folly and to humble herself, from thenceforward he will do her good: not only speak comfortably to her, but do well for her, and undo what he had done against her. He had destroyed her vines, *ver. 12*, but now he will give her whole vineyards, as if for every vine destroyed she should have a vineyard restored, and so be repaid with interest; she shall not only have corn for necessity, but vineyards for delight. These note the privileges and comforts of the gospel, which are prepared for those that come up out of the wilderness leaning upon Christ as their beloved, *Cant. viii. 5*. Note, God has vineyards of consolation ready to bestow on those who repent and return to him; and he can give vineyards out of a wilderness, which are of all other the most welcome, as rest to the weary. (4.) He will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope. The valley of Achor was that in which Achan was stoned, it signifies the valley of trouble, because he troubled Israel, and there God troubled him. This was in the beginning of the wars of Canaan, and their putting away the accursed thing in that place gave them ground to hope, that God would continue his presence with them, and complete their victories. So when God returns to his people in mercy, and they to him in duty, it will be to them as happy an omen as any other, if they put away the accursed thing from among them, if by mortifying sin they stone the Achan that has troubled their camp; by subduing that enemy within themselves, is an earnest to them of victory over all the kings of Canaan. Or if the allusion be to the name, it intimates, that trouble for sin, if it be sincere, opens a door of hope; for that sin that truly troubles us shall not ruin us. The valley of Achor was a very fruitful pleasant valley, some think the same with the valley of Engedi, famous for vineyards, *Cant. i. 14*. This God gave to Israel as a pattern and pledge of the whole land of Canaan, so "God will by his gospel give to all believers such gifts, graces, and comforts in this life, as shall be a taste of those more perfect good things of the kingdom of heaven, and shall give them an assured hope of a full possession of them in due time." So the learned Dr. Pocock expounds it; and to the same purpose this whole context.

VOL. II. No. CXLIII.*

2. The great rejoicing with which they shall receive God's gracious returns towards them. *She shall sing there as in the days of her youth*. This plainly refers to that triumphant and prophetic song which Moses and the children of Israel sung at the Red-sea, *Exod. xv. 1*. When they are delivered out of captivity they shall repeat that song, and to them it shall be a new song, because sung upon a new occasion, not inferior to the former. God had said, *ver. 11. he would cause all her mirth to cease*, but now he would cause it to revive; she shall sing as in the day that she came out of Egypt. Note, When God repeats former mercies we must repeat former praises; we find the song of Moses sung in the New Testament, *Rev. xv. 3*. This promise of Israel's singing has its accomplishment in the gospel of Christ, which furnisheth us with abundant matter for joy and praise; and wherever it is received in its power enlargeth the heart in joy and praise; and is that land flowing with milk and honey, which the valley of Achor opens a door of hope to. We rejoice in tribulation.

2. That though they had been much addicted to the worship of Baal, they should now be perfectly weaned from it, shall relinquish and abandon all appearances of idolatry and approaches towards it, and cleave to God only, and worship him as he appoints, *ver. 16, 17*. Note, The surest pledge and token of God's favour to any people, is his effectual parting between them and their beloved sins. The worship of Baal was the sin that did most easily beset the people of Israel; it was their own iniquity, the sin that had dominion over them; but now that idolatry shall be quite abolished, and there shall not be the least remains of it among them.

1. The idols of Baal shall not be mentioned, not any of the Baals that in the days of Baalim had made so great a noise with O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us. The very name of Baalim shall be taken out of their mouths; they shall be so disused, that they shall be quite forgotten, as if their names had never been known in Israel; they shall be so detested, that people will not bear to mention them themselves, or to hear others mention them; so that posterity shall scarce know that ever there were such things. They shall be so ashamed of their former love to Baal, that they shall do all they can to blot out the remembrance of it. They shall tie themselves up to the strictest literal meaning of that law against idolatry, *Exod. xxii. 13. Make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth*, as David, *Pſalm xvi. 4*. Thus the apostle expresseth the abhorrence we ought to have of all fleshly lusts, *Let them not be once named among you*, *Eph. v. 3*. But how can such a change of the Ethiopian's skin be wrought? It is answered, the power of God can do it and will. I will take away the names of Baalim, as *Zech. xiii. 2. I will cut off the names of the idols*. Note, God's grace in the heart will change the language by making that iniquity to be loathed which was beloved. *Zeph. iii. 9. I will turn to the people a pure language*. One of the rabbins saith this promise relates to the Gentiles as well as Israel; and we know it had its accomplishment in the turning of the Gentiles, by the gospel of Christ from the idolatries which they had been wedded to, *1 Thess. i. 9*.

2. The very word Baal shall be laid aside, even in its innocent signification, God saith, *Thou shalt call me Iſhi, call me no more Baal*; both signify my husband, and both hath been made use of concerning God. *Iſa. liv. 5. Thy maker is thy husband*, thy Baal, so the word is, thy owner, patron and protector. It is probable, many good people had accordingly made use of the word Baal in worshipping the God of Israel; when their wicked neighbours bowed the knee to Baal, they gloried in this, that God was their Baal, but, saith God, you shall call me so no more, because I will have the very names of Baalim taken away. Note, That which is very innocent in itself, yet when it has been abused by idolatry, should be abolished, and the very use of it taken away, that nothing may be done to keep idols in remembrance, much less to keep them in reputation. When calling God Iſhi will do as well, and signify as much as Baali, let that word be chosen rather, lest by calling him Baali, others should be put in mind of their quondam Baals. Some think, there is another reason intimated why God would be called Iſhi and not Baali, they both signify my husband, but Iſhi is a compellation of love and sweetness and familiarity, Baali of reverence and subjection. Iſhi is *vir meus*, Baali is *dominus meus*. In gospel-times God hath so revealed himself to us, as to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of his grace, and to use a holy humble freedom there; we ought to call God our master, for so he is, but we are more taught to call him our Father. Iſhi is *a man the Lord*, (*Gen. iv. 1*) and intimates, that in gospel-times the church's husband shall be the man Christ Jesus; made like unto his brethren, and therefore they shall call him Iſhi, not Baali.

3. That though they had been in continual troubles, as if the whole creation had been at war with them, now they shall enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity, as if they were in a league of friendship with the whole creation. *Ver. 18. In that day, when they have forsaken their idols, and put themselves under the divine protection. I will make a covenant for them*. (1.) They shall be protected from evil, nothing shall hurt them or do them any mischief. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*. The inferior creatures shall do them no harm, as they had done, when the beast of the field eat up their vineyards, *ver. 12*. and when noisome beasts were one of God's fore judgments, *Ezek. xiv. 15*. The fowl and the creeping things are taken into this covenant, for they also, when God makes use of them as the instruments of his justice, may become very hurtful. But they shall be no more so; nay, by virtue of this covenant they shall be made serviceable to them, and brought into their interests. Note, God has the command of the inferior creatures, and brings them into what covenant he pleaseth; he can make the beasts of the field to honour him, so he has promised, *Iſa. xliii. 20*. and to contribute to his people's comfort. And if the inferior creatures are thus laid under an engagement to serve us, it is our part of the covenant not to abuse them, but to serve God with them. Some think this had its accomplishment in the miraculous power Christ gave to his disciples to take up serpents, *Mark xvi. 17, 18*. It agrees with the promises made particularly to Israel in their return out of captivity, *Ezek. xxxiv. 25. I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land*; and the more general ones to all the saints, *Job v. 22, 23. The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee*; and *Pſalm xci. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*. But this is not all; men are more in danger from one another than from the brute beast, and therefore it is further promised, that God will make wars to cease, will disarm the enemy. *I will break the bow, and sword, and battle*. He can do it when he pleaseth, *Pſalm xvi. 9*. and will do it for those whose ways please him, for he maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them, *Prov. xvi. 7*. This agrees with the promise, that in gospel-times swords shall be beaten into plough-shares, *Iſa. ii. 4*. (2.) They shall be quiet from the fear of evil. God will not only keep them safe, but make them to lie down safely, as those that know themselves to be under the protection of heaven, and therefore are not afraid of the powers of hell.

4. That though God had given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms, yet upon their repentance he would again take them into covenant with himself, into a marriage covenant. *Ver. 19, 20. God's making a covenant for them with the inferior creatures was a great favour, but it was nothing to this, that he took them into covenant with himself, and engaged himself*

himself to do them good. Observe, (1.) The nature of this covenant: it is a *marriage-covenant* founded in choice and love, and founding the nearest relation. *I will betroth thee unto me*; and again, a third time, *I will betroth thee*. Note, All that are sincerely devoted to God, are *betrothed* to him; i. e. God gives them the most sacred and inviolable security imaginable that he will love them, protect them, and provide for them; and that he will do the part of a husband to them; and that he will incline their hearts to join themselves to him, and will graciously accept of them in so doing. Believing souls are espoused to Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2. The gospel-church is *the bride, the Lamb's wife*: and they would never come into that relation to him, if he did not by the power of his grace *betroth them* to himself. The separation begins on our side, we alienate ourselves from God; the coalition begins on his side, he *betroths us* to himself. (2.) The duration of this covenant; *I will betroth thee for ever*. The covenant itself shall be inviolable; God *will not break it* on his part, and *you shall not* on yours; and the blessings of it shall be everlasting. One of the Jewish rabbins saith, this is a promise that *she shall attain to the life of the world to come, which is absolute eternity or perpetuity*. (3.) The manner how this covenant shall be made: (1.) In *righteousness and judgment*; i. e. God will deal sincerely and uprightly in covenanting with them: they have broken covenant, and God is righteous; but saith God *I will renew the covenant in righteousness*; the matter shall be so ordered as that God may receive even these *backsliding children* into his family again, without any reflection upon his justice; nay, that being satisfied by the mediator of his covenant, very much to the honour of it. But what reason can there be why God should take a people into covenant with him, that had so often dealt treacherously: Will it not reflect upon his wisdom? No, saith God, *I will do it in judgment*; not rashly, but upon due consideration: let me alone to give a reason for it, and to justify my own conduct. (2.) In *loving-kindness* and in mercies. God will deal tenderly and graciously in covenanting with them; and will be not only as good as his word, but *better*; and as he will be *just* in keeping covenant with them, so he will be *merciful* in keeping them in the covenant. They are subject to many infirmities, and if he be extreme to mark what they do amiss, they will soon lose the benefit of the covenant. He therefore promisseth, that it shall be a *covenant of grace*, made in a compassionate consideration of their infirmities, so as that every transgression in the covenant shall not throw them out of covenant; he will *gather with everlasting loving kindness*. (3.) In *faithfulness*; every article of the covenant shall be punctually performed; *faithful* is he that *has called them*, who also will do it, he cannot *deny himself*. (4.) The means by which they shall be kept tight and faithful to the covenant on their part; *thou shalt know the Lord*. Which is not only a promise that God will reveal himself to them more fully and clearly than ever, but that he will give them a *heart to know him*; they shall know more of him, and shall know him in another manner than ever yet. The ground of their apostasy was, *not knowing God* to be their benefactor, ver. 8. therefore to prevent the like they shall all be *taught of God* to know him. Note, God keeps up his interest in mens souls by giving them a good understanding and a right knowledge of things. Heb. viii. 11.

5. That though the heavens had been to them as brass, and the earth as iron; now the heavens shall yield their dews, and by that means the earth its fruits, ver. 21, 22. God having betrothed the gospel church, and in it all believers to himself, how shall he not with himself and with his Son freely give them all things; all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things they need or can desire? *All is theirs*, for they are *Christ's*, betrothed to him: and with the righteousness of the kingdom of God, which they seek first, all other things shall be added unto them. And yet this promise of corn and wine is to be taken also in a spiritual sense (so the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) it is an effusion of these blessings and graces which relate to the soul, that is here promised under the metaphor of temporal blessings; the dew of heaven, as well as the fatness of the earth, and that put first, as in the blessing of Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 28. God had threatened, ver. 9. that he would *take away the corn and the wine*, but now he promisseth to restore them again, and that in the common course and order of nature. While they lay under the judgment of famine, they called to the earth for corn and wine for the support of themselves and their families; very gladly would the earth have supplied them, but cannot give unless she receive, cannot produce corn and wine, unless it be enriched with the river of God, Psal. lxxv. 9. and therefore calls to the heavens for rain, the former and latter rain in their season, gapes for it, and by its melancholy aspect when rain is denied, pleads for it; but say the heavens, we have no rain to give, unless he who hath the key of the clouds unlock them, and open these bottles; so that if the Lord do not help you, we cannot. But when God takes them into covenant with himself, then the wheel of nature shall be set a-going again in favour of them, and the streams of mercy shall flow in the usual channel. Then *I will hear, saith the Lord, I will receive your prayers*, so the Chaldee interprets the first bearing. God will graciously take notice of their addresses to him. And then *I will hear the heavens*; I will answer them, so it may be read, and then they shall *hear and answer the earth*, and pour down seasonable rain upon it; and then the earth shall *bear the corn and wines*, and supply them with moisture, and they shall *hear Jezreel*, and be nourishment and refreshment from them that inhabit Jezreel. See here the coherence of second causes with one another, as links in a chain, and the necessary dependance they all have upon God the first cause. Note, We must expect all our comforts from God in the usual method and by the appointed means; and when we are at any time disappointed in them, we must look up to God; *above the hills and the mountains*, Psal. cxxi. 1, 2. See how ready the creatures are to serve the people of God; how desirous of the honour; the corn cries to the earth, the earth to the heavens, the heavens to God, and all that they may supply them. And see how ready God is to give relief, *I will hear, saith the Lord, yea, I will hear*. And if God will hear the cry of the heavens for his people, much more will he hear the intercession of his Son for them, who is made *higher than the heavens*. See what a peculiar delight those that are in covenant with God may take in their creature-comforts, as seeing them all come to them from the hand of God; they can run up all the streams to the fountain, and taste covenant love in common mercies, which makes them *doubly sweet*.

6. That whereas they were now dispersed, not only as Simeon and Levi, divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, but divided and scattered all the world over; God will turn this curse, as he did that, into a blessing: I will not only water the earth for her, but will *sow her unto me in the earth*; her dispersion shall not be like that of the chaff in the floor, which the wind *driveth away*, but like that of the seed in the field, in order to its greater increase; wherever they are scattered they shall *take root downwards*, and *bear fruit upwards*. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. *I will sow her unto me*. This alludes to the name Jezreel, which signifies *sown of God*, or *for God*; as she was scattered of him (which is one signification of the words) so she shall be sown of him, and to what he sows he will give *the increase*. When of all parts of the world Christianity got footing, and every where there were professors of it, then this promise was fulfilled, *I will sow her unto me in the earth*. Note, The greatest blessing of this earth is, that God has a church in it, and from that ariseth all the tribute of glory

he hath out of it; it is what he hath *sown to himself*, and what he will therefore secure to himself.

7. That whereas they had been Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, not a people, and not finding mercy with God, now they shall be restored to his favour, and taken again into covenant with him, ver. 23. They had not obtained mercy, but seemed to be abandoned; they were *not my people*, not distinguished, nor dealt with as my people, but left to lie in common with the nations; this was the case of the rejected Jews, and the same or more deplorable was that of the Gentile world, to whom the apostle applies this. Rom. ix. 24, 25. that had *no hope*, and were *without God in the world*; But when great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were upon their believing in Christ incorporated into a church Christian; then, (1.) God had *mercy* on those who *had not obtained mercy*. Those found favour with God, and became the children of his love, who had been long out of favour and the children of his wrath: and if infinite mercy had not interposed, would have been for ever so. Note, God's mercy must not be despaired of any where on this side hell. (2.) He took those into a covenant-relation to himself, who had been strangers and foreigners. He saith to them, *Thou art my people*, whom I will own and bless, protect and provide for; and they shall say, *Thou art my God*, whom I will serve and worship, and to whose honour I will be entirely and for ever devoted. Note, 1. The sum total of the happiness of believers is the mutual relation that is between them and God, that he is theirs and they are his; this is the crown of all the promises.

2. This relation is founded in free grace; we have not *chosen him*, but he hath *chosen us*. He first saith they are *my people*, and makes them willing to be so in the day of his power, and then they avouch him to be theirs. 3. As we need desire no more to make us happy, but to be the people of God, so we need desire no more to make us easy and cheerful, but to have him to assure us that we are so; to say unto us, by his Spirit witnessing with ours, *Thou art my people*. 4. Those that have accepted of the Lord for their God must avouch him to be so, must go to him in prayer, and tell him so, *Thou art my God*, and must be ready to make profession before men. 5. It adds to the comfort of our covenant with God, that in it there is a communion of saints; who though they are many, yet here they are one. It is not, I will say to them, *ye are my people*, but *thou art*; for he looks upon them as all one in Christ, and as such in him, he speaks to them, and covenants with them; and they also do not say, *Thou art our God*, for they look upon themselves as one body, and desire with one mind and one mouth to glorify him, and therefore say, *Thou art my God*. Or it intimates, that such a covenant as God made of old with his people Israel in general, now under the gospel he makes with particular believers; and saith to each of them, even the meanest, with as much pleasure as he did of old to the thousands of Israel, *thou art my people*, and invites and encourageth each of them to say, *Thou art my God*, and to triumph therein, as Moses and all Israel did, Exod. xv. 2. He is *my God*, and my father's God.

C H A P. III.

God is still by the prophet inculcating the same thing upon this careless people, and much in the same manner as before, by a type or sign, that of the dealings of a husband with an adulterous wife. In this chapter we have, (1.) The bad character which the people of Israel now had; they were, as is said of the Athenians (Acts xvii. 16.) wholly given to idolatry, ver. 1. (2.) The low condition which they should be reduced to by their captivity, and other the instances of God's controversy with them, ver. 2, 3, 4. (3.) The blessed reformation that should at length be brought upon them in the latter days, ver. 5.

1. THEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman (beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress) according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love flagons of wine. 2. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley. 3. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee. 4. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. 5. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and shall fear the LORD, and his goodness in the latter days.

Some think this chapter refers to Judah, the two tribes, as the adulteress the prophet married, chap. i. 3. represented the ten tribes; for this was not to be divorced, as the ten tribes were, but to be left desolate for a long time, and then to return as the two tribes did; but these are called the children of Israel, which was the ten tribes, and therefore it is most probable that of them this parable, as well as that before, is to be understood. Go and repeat it, saith God to the prophet; Go yet again. Note, For the conviction and reduction of sinners it is necessary that precept be upon precept, and line upon line. If they will not believe one sign, try another, Exod. iv. 8, 9.

Now in this parable we may observe,

1. God's goodness and Israel's badness, strangely serving for a foil to each other, ver. 1. Israel is as a woman beloved of her friend, either of him that has married her, or of him that only courts her, and yet an adulteress; such is the case between God and Israel. We say of those whose affection is mutual, that there is *no love lost* between them; but here we find a great deal of love, even of God himself, lost and thrown away upon an unworthy ungrateful people. The God of Israel retains a very great love for the children of Israel, and yet they are an evil and adulterous generation. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! (1.) That God's goodness has not put an end to their badness; the Lord loves them, has a kindness for them, and is continually shewing kindness to them; they know it, they cannot but own it, that he has been as a friend and father to them; and yet they look to other gods, gods that they can see, and to the love of which they are drawn by the eye, they look to them with an eye of adoration, they offer up all their services to them; and with an eye of dependence, they expect all their comforts from them; if they were restrained from bowing the knee to idols, yet they gave them an amorous glance, and had eyes full of that spiritual adultery. And they love flagons of wine; they therefore joined with idolatries because they lived merrily and drank hard; they had a kindness for other gods for the sake of the plenty of good wine with which they had been sometimes treated in their temples. Idolatry

Idolatry and sensuality commonly go together; those that make a God of their belly, as drunkards do, will easily be brought to make a god of any thing else. God's priests were to *drink no wine* when they went in to minister, and his Nazarites none at all. But the worshippers of other gods *drank wine in bowls*, nay, no less than *flaggons of wine* would content them.

(2.) That their badness had not put an end to God's goodness, and stopped the current of his favours to them. This is a wonder of mercy indeed, that she is thus *beloved of her friend, though an adulteress*; such is the *love of the Lord toward the children of Israel*. Go, faith God, *love such a woman*, see if thou canst find in thy heart to do it; no, thou canst not, the breast of no man would admit such a love, yet such is my *love to the children of Israel*; it is love to the *loveliest*, to the *unlovely*, to those that have a thousand times forfeited it. Note, In God's good will to poor sinners, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and his love is more condescending and compassionate than ours is or can be; in this as much as any thing he is *God and not man*, Hos. xi. 9.

2. The method found for the bringing of a God so very good and a people so very bad together again; this is the thing aimed at, and what God aims at he will accomplish; to our great surprise, we find a breach thus wide as the sea effectually healed; miracles cease not so long as divine mercy doth not cease. Observe here,

1. The course God takes to humble them, and make them know themselves, *ver. 2. I have bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley*, i. e. I courted her to be reconciled, to leave her ill courses, and return to her first husband, as *chap. ii. 14. I allured her, and spake comfortably to her*; as the *Lewite went after his concubine* that had *played the harlot* from him, and was run away with by another man, he *spake friendly to her*, Judges xix. 3. But here the present which the prophet brought her for the purchasing of her favour is observed to be a very small one, but it was all that was intended for her *separate maintenance*, and in it she is reduced to a *short allowance*, and to punish her for her pride, is made to look very mean. When Samson went to be reconciled to his wife that had disobliged him, he *visited her with a kid*, Judges xv. 1. which was a genteel entertainment. But the prophet here visited his wife with *fifteen pieces of silver*, a small sum, which yet she must be content to live upon a great while, so long as till her husband thought fit to restore her to her first estate. She shall also have *a homer and a half of barley*, for bread corn, and that is all she must expect till she be sufficiently humbled, and by a competent time of trial, satisfactory proof given that she is indeed reformed. Let her be made sensible that it is not for her own merit that her husband makes court to her, it is but at a lame price that he values her; the price of a servant was thirty shekels, *Exod. xxi. 32*. This was but half so much, yet let her know it is more than she is worth. God had given Egypt for Israel's ransom once, *so precious* were they then *in his sight*, and *so honourable*, Isa. xliii. 3, 4. But now they have gone a whoring from him, he will give but *fifteen pieces of silver* for them, so much have they lost in their value by their iniquity. Note, Those whom God designs honour and comfort for, he first makes sensible of their own worthlessness, and brings them to acknowledge with the prodigal, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*. Time was when Israel was *fed with the fruit of the wheat*, but they grew wanton, and *loved flaggons of wine*; and therefore in order to the humbling and reducing of them they must be brought in the land of their captivity to eat *barley bread*, and be thankful they can get it; and to eat that too by weight and measure, whereas they did not use to be stinted. Note, Poverty and disgrace sometimes prove a happy means of making great sinners true penitents.

2. The new terms upon which God is willing to come with them, *ver. 3. Thou shalt abide for me many days, and shalt not be for another, so will I be for thee*. He might justly have given them a bill of divorce, and have resolved to have no more to do with them, but he is willing to shew them kindness, and that the matter should be compromised; he deals not with them in strict justice, according to the rigour of the law, but according to the multitude of his mercies; and it represents God's gracious dealings with the apostate race of mankind, that had gone a whoring from him; he bought them indeed with an inestimable price, not for their honour, but for the honour of his own justice; now this is the proposal he makes to them, the covenant of grace he is willing to enter into with them, they must be to him a people, and he will be to them a God; the same with the proposal here made to Israel.

1. They must take to themselves the shame of their apostasy from him, must submit to, and accept of, the punishment of their iniquity. *Thou shalt abide for me many days in solitude and silence*, as a widow that is desolate and in sorrow; they must *lay aside their ornaments*, and wait with patience and submission to know what God will do with them, and whether he will please to admit such unworthy wretches into his favour again, as they did *Exod. xxxiii. 4, 5. Their father, their husband, has spit in their face*; (as God said concerning Miriam) hath put them under the marks of his displeasure, and therefore, like her, they must be *ashamed seven days*, and he *shut out of the camp*, Numb. xii. 14. till their *uncircumcised hearts be humbled*, Lev. xxvi. 41. Let them *sit alone and keep silence, waiting for the salvation of the Lord*, and in the mean time let them *bear the yoke*, Lam. iii. 26, 27, 28. Let them not expect that God should *speedily return in mercy* to them, as sometimes he has done, that comfort should come over-cheap and easy to them, no, let them wait it, let them wait for it *many days*, during all the days of their captivity, and reckon it a miracle of mercy, and well worth waiting for, if it come at last. Note, Those whom God designs mercy for, he will first bring to abase themselves, and to put a high value upon his favours.

2. They must never return to folly again; that is the condition upon which God will *speak peace to his people, and to his saints*, Psal. lxxxv. 8. and no other. *Thou shalt not play the harlot, shalt not worship idols in the land of thy captivity*, while thou art there set apart for thine uncleanness. Note, It is not enough to take shame to ourselves for the sins we have committed, and to justify God in correcting us for them, but we must resolve in the strength of God's grace that we will not offend any more; that we will not again go a whoring from God, after the world and the flesh. Blessed be God, though it is the law of the covenant, it is not the condition of it, that we shall never in any thing do amiss, but thou shalt not *play the harlot*, thou shalt not serve other gods, *shalt not be for another man*. In the land of their captivity, they would be courted to worship the idols of the country, that would be a trial to them, a *long trial*, many days, but if thou keep thy ground, and hold fast thine integrity, if when *all this is come upon thee*, yet thou dost not *stretch out thine hand to a strange god*, thou wilt be qualified for the returns of God's favour. Note, It is a certain sign that our afflictions are means of much good to us, and earnest of more, when we are kept by the grace of God from being overcome by the temptations of an afflicted state.

3. Upon these terms their Maker will again be their husband; *so will I also be for thee*. This is the covenant between God and returning sinners, that if they will be for him to serve him, he will be for them to save them. Let them renounce and adjure all rivals with God for the throne in the

heart, and devote themselves entirely to him, and him only, and he will be to them a God all-sufficient. If we be faithful and constant to God in a way of duty, and will never leave nor forsake him, he will be so to us in a way of mercy, and will never leave or forsake us. And a fairer proposal could not be made.

Now in the two last verses we have the reddition of the parable, and the application of it to Israel.

1. They must long *sit like a widow*, stripped of all their joys and honours, *Lam. iv. 1, 2. They shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, &c.* and a nation in this condition may well be called a widow. They want the blessing, (1.) Of civil government; they shall abide *without a king*, and *without a prince* of their own. There were kings and princes over them to oppress them and rule them with rigor, but they had no king nor prince to protect them, to fight their battles for them, and administer justice to them, and to take care of their common safety and welfare. Note, Magistracy is a very great blessing to a people, and it is a sad and sore judgment to want it. (2.) Of public worship; they shall abide *without a sacrifice*, and *without an image*, or a *statue or pillar*; it is used concerning the pillars Jacob erected, (*Gen. xxviii. 18.—xxx. 25.—xxxv. 20*) and *without an ephod and teraphim*. The *teraphim* being here closely joined to the *ephod*, some think the *urim and thummim* were meant by it in the breast-plate of the high-priest. The meaning is, that in their captivity they should not only have no face of a nation upon them, but no face of a church; they should not have (as a learned expositor speaks) liberty of any public profession or exercise of religion, either true or false, according to their choice. They shall have *no sacrifice or altar*, so the LXX. and therefore no sacrifice because no altar. They shall have *no ephod*, or *teraphim*, no legal priesthood, no means of knowing God's mind, no oracle to consult in doubtful cases; but shall be all in the dark. Note, The case of those in very melancholy, that are deprived of all opportunities to worship God in public. This was the case of the Jews in their captivity; and is so far the case of the scattered Jews at this day, that though they have their *synagogues*, they have *no temple-service*. *Desolate indeed* is their condition, that are shut out from communion with God, that have no opportunity of directing their addresses to God by sacrifice and altar, and of receiving instructions from him by *ephod and teraphim*.

2. They shall at length be received again as a wife, *ver. 5. afterwards, in process of time, when they have gone through this discipline, they shall return*, i. e. they shall repent of their idolatries and forsake them, they shall apply themselves to God, and adhere to him, and herein they shall be accepted of him. Two things are here promised as instances of their return, and steps towards their acceptance with God in their return.

1. The enquiries they shall make after God. *They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king*. Note, Those that would find God, and find favour with him, must seek him; and must ask after him, covet acquaintance with him, desire to be reconciled to him, set their love on him, and labour in this that they may be accepted of him. Their seeking him implies that they had lost him, that they were lamenting the loss, and that they were solicitous to retrieve what they had lost. They shall seek him as *their God*, for *should not a people seek unto their God?* And they shall seek *David their king*; who can be no other, but the Messiah our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the root and offspring of David, whom David himself called *Lord*, Psal. cx. 1. and to whom God gave the *throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32. The Chaldee reads it, they shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey *Messiah the son of David their king*. Compare this with *Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxii. 23.—xxxvii. 25*. Note, Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and must seek to him as *their king*, and become as willing people, and take an oath of fealty and allegiance to him.

2. The reverence they shall have of God; *they shall fear the Lord and his goodness*; some by his *goodness* here understand the temple, towards which they shall look in worshipping God. The Jews say, there were three things which Israel cast off in the days of Rehoboam, the kingdom of heaven, the family of David, and the house of the sanctuary, and it will never be well with them till they return and seek them all three, which is here promised; they shall seek the kingdom of heaven in the Lord their God, the royal family in David their king, and the temple in the goodness of the Lord. Others by his *goodness* understand Christ; the same with David their king, but it is rather to be taken for that attribute of God, which he shewed as his glory, and by which he proclaimed his name. Note, It is not only the Lord and his greatness that we are to fear, but the Lord and his goodness, not only his majesty, but his mercy. They shall *flee for fear to the Lord and his goodness*, (so some take it) shall flee to it as their city of refuge. We must fear God's goodness, i. e. we must admire it, and stand amazed at it, must adore it, and worship as Moses did at the proclaiming of this name, *Exod. xxxiv. 6*. We must be afraid of offending his goodness, of making any ungrateful returns for it, and so forfeiting it. *There is forgiveness of God that he may be feared*, Psal. cxxx. 4. We must rejoice with trembling in the goodness of God, must not be high minded but fear.

Now this promise had its accomplishment, when by the gospel of Christ great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were brought home to God, and incorporated in the New Testament church; served God in Christ, with a filial fear of divine grace, and were accepted of God as his Israel. And some think it is to be yet further accomplished in the conversion of those Jews by the faith of Christ, who shall remain in unbelief; when they shall seek their Messiah as David their king, and by him all Israel shall be saved, when the *fulness of the Gentiles is brought in*. Time was when they sought him to put him to death, saying, *We have no king but Cæsar*; but the day is coming when they shall seek him to appoint him their head, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that hath here promised they shall do it, will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time; in the latter days of the last times, the times of the Messiah; but alas, who shall live when God doth this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation, I cannot say, but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

C H A P. IV.

Prophets were sent to be reprovers, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here as counsel for the King of kings, opening an indictment against the people of Israel, and labouring to convince them of sin, and of their misery and danger because of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. (1.) He shews them what were the grounds of God's controversy with them; a general prevalency of vice and profaneness, *ver. 1, 2. ignorance and forgetfulness of God, ver. 6, 7. the worldly-mindedness of the priests, ver. 8. drunkenness and uncleanness, ver. 11. using divination and witchcraft, ver. 12. offering sacrifice in the high places, ver. 13. whoredom, ver. 14—18. and bribery among*

among magistrates, ver. 18. (2.) *He shews them what would be the consequences of God's controversy, God would punish them for these things, ver. 9. The whole land should be laid waste, ver. 3. all sorts of people cut off, ver. 5. their honour lost, ver. 7. their creature-comforts unsatisfying, ver. 10. and themselves made ashamed, ver. 19. And which is several times mentioned here as the forest judgment of all, they should be let alone in their sins, ver. 17. they shall not reprove one another, ver. 4. God will not punish them, ver. 14. Nay, he will let them prosper, ver. 16. (3.) He gives warning to Judah not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw their steps went down to hell, ver. 15.*

1. **H**EAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel; for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there* is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.
2. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.
3. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.
4. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.
5. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night. and I will destroy thy mother.

Here is, 1. The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.* Whom may God expect to give him a *fair hearing*, and to take from him a *fair warning*, but the children of Israel, his own professing people? yea, they will be ready enough to hear when God speaks comfortably to them, but are they willing to hear when he hath a *controversy* with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge. *The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, of this land, of this holy land.* Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker, it sows discord between God and Israel. God sees sin in his own people, and a *god action* he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him; and for an ungrateful return to him for his favours. God's controversy will be *pleaded*; pleaded by the judgments of his mouth before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand; that he may be justified in all he doth, and may make it appear he desires not the death of sinners; and God's *pleadings* ought to be attended to, for sooner or later they shall have a *hearing*.

2. The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked. (1.) They are charged with *national omissions* of the most important duties; *there is no truth nor mercy; neither justice nor charity; these most weighty matters of the law, as our Saviour accounts them, Matt. xxiii. 23. judgment, mercy, and faith.* The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called *honesty*; they made no conscience of what they said and did, though never so contrary to the truth, and injurious to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of *mercy*, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange there is *no truth and mercy*, when there is *no knowledge of God in the land*; what good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God! It was the privilege of *that land, that in Israel God was made known, and his name great*, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did not *know him*, Psal. lxxvi. 1. (2.) Hence follow *national commissions* of the most enormous sins against both the first and second table, for they had no regard at all to either. *Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery*, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all corners of the nation, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, ver. 2. The corruption was universal, what good people there were among them were either lost or hid, or hid themselves. By these they *break out*, i. e. they transgress all bounds of reason and conscience, and the divine law, *they have exceeded*, Job. xxxvi. 9. they have been *overmuch wicked*, Eccl. vii. 17. they suffer their corruptions to break out, they themselves break over and break through all that stands in their way, and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing, and its power exorbitant; when men's hearts are *fully set in them to do evil*, (Eccl. viii. 11.) *what will be restrained from them?* Gen. xi. 6. When they break out thus, *blood touches blood*, i. e. abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country, and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. *Cordes alius alius sunt contigue*; a stream of blood runs down among them, even royal blood; it was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown; Shallum slew Zechariah, and Menahem slew Shallum, Pekah slew Pekabiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contenders; so then the land was *polluted with blood*, Psal. cvi. 38. *it was filled with blood from one end to the other*, 2 Kings xxi. 16.

3. Sentence passed upon this guilty and polluted land, ver. 3. It shall be utterly destroyed and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore *the whole land shall mourn* under God's sore judgments; shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty: As the vallies are said to *sob for joy and sing*, when there is plenty and peace, so here they are said to *mourn*, when by war and famine they are made desolate. *The whole land shall be brimstone and salt, and burning*, as was threatened in the law, Deut. xxix. 23. They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts. *The land mourns* when there is neither *grass for the cattle, nor herb for the service of man*; and then *every one that dwelleth therein shall languish* for want of nice food to support a wailing life, and fret for want of the usual dainties for delight. *The beasts of the field will languish*, Jer. xiv. 5, 6. Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great, that there shall not be picking for the *fowls of the air*, to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man, and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with wild-fowl. Nay, *the fishes of the sea shall be taken away, or gathered together*, that they may go away in shoals to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall: It was part of one of

the plagues of Egypt that he *slew their fish*, Psal. cv. 20. when the waters are dried the *fish die*, Isa. 1. 2. Zeph. i. 2, 3. Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. O what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that though there is in it so much swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl on our tables!

4. An order of court, that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Observe,

1. The order itself, ver. 4. *yet let no man strive or reprove another*, i. e. let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them, let their physicians give them up as desperate and past cure. It intimates that as long as there is any hope we ought to reprove sinners for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another to give and take reproofs, it was one of the laws of Moses, Lev. xix. 17. *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour*, it is an instance of brotherly love; sometimes there is need to *rebuke sharply*, not only to *reprove*, but to *strive*, so loth are men to part with their sins: But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin, when God saith, *let them not be reprov'd*. Yet this is to be understood as God's command sometimes to the prophets not to *pray for them*, notwithstanding which, they did pray for them; but the meaning is, they are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose, either to deal with them, or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silent, and when those who should witness against the sins of the times retire into a corner, and give up the cause. See 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

2. The reasons of this order, let them not reprove one another; for (1.) They are determined to *go on in sin*, and no reproofs will cure them of that. *Thy people are as they that strive with the priest*, i. e. they are grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself, if he should but give them the least check, without any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought they should take a reproof from a private person? Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened that quarrel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Josiah king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. He was a *priest*, with him they *strive*, when he was officiating between the temple and the altar; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case when he spoke, ver. 2. *of blood touching blood*, the blood of the *sacrifice* was mingled with the blood of the *sacrifice*, that (saith he) was the *apex of their wickedness*, from thence their ruin was to be dated, Matt. xxiii. 35. as this is of their *incorrigibleness*, that they are as those who *strive with the priest*, therefore let no man reprove them; for, (2.) God also is determined to *proceed in their ruin*, ver. 5. *therefore* because thou wilt take no reproof, no advice, *thou shalt fall*, and it is in vain for any to think of preventing it, for the *decree is gone forth*. Thou shalt tumble and fall in the day, and the prophet, the false prophet that flattered and seduced thee, shall fall with thee in the night, i. e. both thou and thy prophet shall fall night and day, shall be continually falling into one calamity or other; the darkness of the night shall not help to cover thee from trouble, nor the light of the day help thee to flee from it. The prophets are *blind leaders*, and the people *blind followers*, and to the blind day and night are alike; so that whether it be day or night, both shall fall together into the ditch. Thou shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself, and thou art very secure; and in the night, when it will be seen and observed by others. and turn most to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible. Note, The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others, will, in a special manner be intolerable. And did the children think, when they were in danger of falling, their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for *I will destroy thy mother*; Samaria, the mother city; the whole state or kingdom, which is as a mother to every part. It shall all be made silent. Note, When all are involved in guilt, nothing less can be expected, but that all should be involved in ruin.

6. ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. 7. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. 8. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. 9. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. 10. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

God is here proceeding with his controversy, both with the priests, and with the people; *the people* were as those that *strive with the priests*, ver. 4. when they had priests that did their duty; but the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty; and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, Jer. ii. 31. And it is observable here, how the punishment answers the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over-against the other.

1. The people *strive with the priests*, that should have taught them the knowledge of God justly, therefore are they *destroyed for lack of knowledge*, ver. 6. Note, Those that rebel against the light, can expect no other but to perish in the dark. Or it is a charge upon the priests, who should have been still *teaching the people knowledge*, (Eccl. xii. 9.) but they did not, or did it in such a manner, that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was *no knowledge of God in the land*; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people *perished*, Prov. xxix. 18. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the mother of destruction; lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are *my people* that are thus *destroyed*; their relation to God as *his people*, aggravates both their sin in not taking pains to get the knowledge of that God, whose command they were under, and with whom they were taken into covenant; and their sin likewise who should have taught them; God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them, nor took any pains with them.

2. Both priests and people *rejected knowledge*, and justly therefore will God *reject them*. The reason why the people did not learn, and the priests did not teach, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it; not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God, and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they *rejected it*. They *desired not the knowledge of God's ways*, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light; and therefore *I will also reject thee*, I will refuse to take cognizance of thee, and to own thee; you will not know me, but bid me depart; I will therefore say, *Depart from me, I know you not*. Thou shalt be no priest to me. (1.) The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, *Ezek. xiv. 13*. Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers; but that which they seem to have should be taken away, *Luke viii. 18*. (2.) The people shall be no longer as they have been, a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood, *Exod. xix. 6*. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour, and profane their own crown.

3. They forgot the law of God, neither desired nor endeavoured to retain it in mind, nor transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God forget them and their children; the people's children, they did not educate them as they ought to have done in the knowledge of God, and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children when they are young, to remember their Creator, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or it may be meant of the priests' children, they shall not succeed them in the priest's office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house, *1 Sam. ii. 20*.

4. They dishonoured God with that which was their honour, and justly therefore will God strip them of it, *ver. 7*. It was their honour that they were increased in number, wealth, power, and dignity; the beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time, it greatly increased and grew very considerable; the family of the priests increased wonderfully; but as they were increased, so they sinned against God; the more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed, and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power, did but make them the more daring in sin. Therefore (saith God) *will I change their glory into shame*. Is their numbers their glory? God will diminish them, and make them few. Is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them, and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their priests shall be made contemptible and base, *Mal. ii. 9*. Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will sooner or later be turned into shame to us; for they that despise God, shall be lightly esteemed, *1 Sam. ii. 30*.

5. The priests eat up the sin of God's people, and therefore they shall eat, and not have enough. (1.) They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priests; to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to the mock-priests of the calves, by their constitution, *ver. 8*. They eat up the sin of my people, i. e. their sin-offerings; if it be meant of the priests of the calves, it intimates their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests, though they were no priests. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon their part of the offerings of the Lord, but forgot the work for which they were so well paid; they set their hearts upon the people's iniquities, they lifted up their soul to them, i. e. they were glad when people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have their share of; the more sins, the more sacrifices; and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead of warning the people against sin, from the considerations of the sacrifices, which shewed them what an offence sin was to God, since he needed such an expiation, they emboldened and encouraged the people to sin, since an atonement might be made at so small an expence. Thus they glutted themselves upon the sins of the people, and helped to keep up that which they should have beaten down. Note, It is a very wicked thing to be well pleased with the sins of others, because some way or other they may turn to our advantage. (2.) God will therefore deny them his blessing upon their maintenance, *ver. 10*. They shall eat, and not have enough. Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it. Note, What is unreasonably coveted, cannot be comfortably used; no, nor that which is inordinately coveted; it is just that the desires that are insatiable, should always be unsatisfied; and that those should never have enough, who never know when they have enough. See *Mic. vi. 14*. *Hag. i. 6*.

6. The more they increased, the more they sinned, *ver. 7*, and therefore though they commit whoredom, though they take the most wicked methods to multiply their people, yet they shall not increase. Though they have many wives and concubines as Solomon had, yet they shall not have their families built up by it in a numerous progeny, no more than he had. Note, Those that hope any way to increase by unlawful means, will be disappointed. And therefore God will thus blast all their projects, because they have left off to take heed to the Lord; time was, when they had some regard to God, and to his authority over them, and interest in them, but they have left it off; they take no heed to his word or to his providences, they do not eye him in either. They forsake him, so as not to take heed to him; they have apostatized to that degree, that they have no manner of regard to God, but are perfectly without God in the world. Note, Those that leave off to take heed to the Lord, leave off all good, and can expect no other but that all good should leave them.

7. The people and the priests did harden one another in sin, and therefore justly shall they be sharers in the punishment. *Ver. 9*. There shall be like people, like priest. So they were in character, people and priest were both alike ignorant and profane, regardless of God and their duty, and addicted to idolatry; and so they shall be in condition, God will bring judgments upon them that shall be the destruction both of priest and people; the famine that deprives the people of their meat, shall deprive the priests of their meat-offerings, *Joel i. 9*. It is part of the description of an universal desolation, that it shall be as with the people, so with the priest, *Isa. xxiv. 2*. God's judgments when they come with commission, will make no difference. Note, Sharers in sin, must expect to be sharers in ruin. Thus God will punish them both for their ways, and reward them their doings. God will cause their doings to return upon them; so the word is when a sin is committed, the sinner thinks it is gone, and he shall hear no more of it, but he shall find it called over again, and made to return, either to his humiliation or condemnation.

8. They indulged themselves in the delights of sense to hold up their hearts, but they shall find that they take away their hearts, *ver. 11*. Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart. Some join this with the foregoing words, They have forsaken the Lord, to take heed to whoredom, and wine, and new wine; Or, because these have taken away their heart. Their

sensual pleasures have taken them off from their devotions, and drowned all that is good in them. Or, we may take it as a distinct sentence, containing a great truth we see confirmed by every day's experience; theft, drunkenness, and uncleanness, are sins that besot and insatiate men, weaken and enfeeble them. They take away both the understanding and the courage.

12. ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. 13. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. 14. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall. 15. ¶ Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth. 16. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place. 17. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone. 18. Their drink is four: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye. 19. The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

In these verses we have as before,

1. The sins charged upon the people of Israel; for which God had a controversy with them. And they are,

1. *Spiritual whoredom*, i. e. idolatry; they have in them a spirit of whoredoms, i. e. a strong inclination to that sin, the bent and bias of their hearts is that way, it is their own iniquity, they are carried out towards it with an unaccountable violence, and this causeth them to err. Note, The errors and mistakes of the judgment, are commonly owing to the corrupt affections; men therefore have a good opinion of sin, because they have a disposition towards it. And having such erroneous notions of idols, and such passionate motions towards them, no marvel, that with such a head and such a heart, they have gone a whoring from under their God, *ver. 12*. They ought to have been in subjection to him as their head and husband, to have been under his conduct and command, but they revolted from their allegiance, and put themselves under the conduct and protection of false gods. So, *ver. 15*. Israel has played the harlot; their carriage in the worship of their idols, was like that of a harlot, wanton and impudent. And *ver. 16*. Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer; as an untamed heifer, so tame; or, as a perverse or refractory one, so other; as a heifer that is turned loose, runs madly about the pasture; or if put under the yoke (which seems rather to be alluded to here) will draw back instead of going forward, will struggle to get her neck out of the yoke, and her feet out of the furrow. Thus unruly, ungovernable, untractable, were the people of Israel. They had begun to draw in the yoke of God's ordinances, but they drew back as children of Belial, that will not endure the yoke; and when the prophets were sent with the goads of reproof, to put them forwards, they kicked against the pricks, and run backwards. The sum of all is, *ver. 17*, Ephraim, is joined by idols, is perfectly wedded to them, his affections are glued to them, and his heart is upon them.

There are two instances given of their spiritual whoredom, in both which they gave that honour to their idols, which is due to God only. (1.) They consulted them as oracles, and used those arts of divination which they had learned from their idolatrous priests, *Ver. 12*. My people ask counsel at their stocks, their wooden gods; they apply themselves to them for advice and direction in what they should do, and for information concerning the event. They say to a stock, Thou art my father, *Jer. ii. 27*. and if it were indeed a father, it were worthy of this honour; but it was a great affront to God, who was indeed their Father, and whose lively oracles they had among them, with which they had liberty to consult at any time, thus to ask counsel at their stocks: And they expect that their staff should declare to them what course they should take, and what the event should be. It is probable this refers to some wicked methods of divination used among the Gentiles, and which the Jews learned from them by a piece of wood or by a staff, like Nebuchadnezzar's divining by his arrows; *Ezek. xxi. 21*. Note, Those who forsake the oracles of God, to take their measures from the world and the flesh, do in effect, but consult with their stocks and their staves. (2.) They offered sacrifices to them as gods; whose favour they wanted, and whose wrath they dreaded and deprecated, *ver. 13*. They sacrifice to them, to atone and pacify them, and burn incense to them, to please and gratify them; and hope by both to recommend themselves to them. God had pitched upon the place where he would record his name, but they having forsaken that, chose places for their irreligious rites which pleased their own fancies; they chose, (1.) High places, upon the tops of the mountains, and upon the hills, foolishly imagining that the height of the ground gave them some advantage in their approaches towards heaven. (2.) Shady places, under oaks, and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is pleasant to them, especially in those hot countries, and therefore they thought it was pleasing to their gods; or they fancied that a thick shade befriended contemplation, possessed the mind with something of an awe, and therefore is proper for devotion.

2. Corporal whoredom is another crime here charged upon them, They have committed whoredom continually, *ver. 18*. They drove a trade of uncleanness, it was not a single act now and then, but their constant practice; as it is of many that have eyes full of adultery, and which cannot cease from that sin, *2 Pet. ii. 14*. Now the abominable filthiness and lewdness that was found in Israel, is here spoken of, (1.) As a concomitant of their idolatry, so their false gods drew them to it; for the devil whom they worshipped, though a spirit is an unclean spirit. They that worshipped idols, were separated with whores, and they sacrificed with harlots; for because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but dishonoured him, therefore God gave them up to vile affections, by the indulging of which they dishonoured themselves, *Rom. i. 24-28*. (2.) As a punishment of it. The men that worshipped idols, were separated with whores that attended the idolatrous rites, as in the worship of Baal-peor, *Numb. xxv. 1, 2*. And

to punish them for that, God gave up their wives and daughters to the like vile affections, they committed *whoredom and adultery*. ver. 13. which could not but be a grief and reproach to their husbands and parents, for those that are not chaste themselves desire to have their wives and daughters so; but thus they might read their sin in their punishment, as David's adultery was punished in the debauching of his concubines by his own son, 2 Sam. xii. 11. Note, When the same sin in others is made men's grief and affliction, which they have themselves been guilty of, they must own the Lord is righteous.

3. The perverting of justice; ver. 18. *Their rulers* (be it spoken to their shame) do love *Give ye, i. e.* they love bribes, and have it continually in their mouths, *Give, give*; they are given to *filthy lucre*; every one that has any business with them, must expect to be asked, What will you give? Though as rulers, they are bound by office to do justice, yet none can have justice done them without a fee, and then you may be sure for a fee they will do injustice. Note, the love of money is the ruin of equity, and the root of all iniquity. But of all men it is a shame for rulers, who should be men *fearing God and hating covetousness*, to love *Give ye*. Perhaps this is intended in that part of the charge here, *Their drink is sour*, it is dead, it is gone; justice duly administered, is refreshing like drink to the thirsty, but when it is perverted, and rulers take rewards, either to acquit the guilty, or to condemn the innocent, the drink is sour; they turn judgment into wormwood, Amos v. 7. Or it may refer in general to the depraved morals of the whole nation; they had lost all their life and spirit, and were as offensive to God as dead or sour drink is to us. See Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.

2. The tokens of God's wrath against them for their sins.

1. Their wives and daughters should not be punished for the injury and disgrace they did to their families, ver. 14. *I will not punish your daughters*; and not being punished for it, they would go on it. Note, The impunity of one sinner is sometimes made the punishment of another. Or, *I will not punish them* so as I will punish you, for you must own as Judah did concerning his daughter-in-law, that *they were more righteous than you*, Gen. xxxviii. 26.

2. They themselves should prosper for a while, but their prosperity should help to destroy them. It comes in as a token of God's wrath, ver. 16. *The Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place*; they shall have a fat pasture, and a large one, in which they shall be fed to the full, and fed with the best, but it shall be only to prepare them for the slaughter as a lamb is that is so fed. If they *eat fat and kick*, they do but wax fat for the butcher. But others made them feed as a lamb on the common, a large place indeed, but where it is short grass and lies exposed; the shepherd of Israel will turn them both out of his pastures, and out of his protection.

3. No means should be used to bring them to repentance; ver. 17. *Ephraim is joined to idols*, is in love with them, and addicted to them, and therefore *let him alone*, as ver. 4. *Let no man reprove him*. Let him be given up to his own heart's lusts; and walk in his own counsels, we would have healed him, and he would not be healed, therefore *for sake him*. See what their end will be, Deut. xxxii. 20. Note, It is a sad and fore judgment for any man to be *let alone in sin*; for God to say concerning a sinner, he is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh, he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable drunkard or adulterer, *let him alone*; conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providence let him alone. Let nothing awaken him till the flames of hell do it. The father corrects not the rebellious son any more when he determines to dishonour him. Those that are not disturbed in their sin, will be destroyed for their sin.

4. They should be hurried away with a swift and shameful destruction, ver. 19. *The wind has bound her up in her wings* to carry her away into captivity, suddenly, violently, and irresistibly; he shall take them away *with a whirlwind*, Psalm lviii. 9. And then *they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices*, ashamed of their sin in offering sacrifice to idols; ashamed of their folly in putting themselves to such an expence upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby to make that God their enemy that has an almighty power to destroy them. Note, There are sacrifices that men will one day be ashamed of. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honour, and all their comforts to the world and the flesh, will shortly be ashamed of it. Yea, and those that bring to God blind and lame, and heartless sacrifices, will be ashamed of them too.

3. The warning given to Judah, not to sin after the similitude of Israel's transgression. It is said in the close of ver. 11. *They that do not understand shall fall*; they must needs fall that do not understand how to avoid or get over the stumbling-blocks they meet with; and therefore, *let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*, particularly the two tribes; ver. 15. *Though then Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend*. Though Israel be given to idolatry, yet let not Judah take the infection. Now, (1.) This was a very needful caution. The men of Israel were brethren, and near neighbours to the men of Judah; Israel was more numerous, and at this time in a prosperous condition, and therefore there was danger lest the men of Judah should learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Note, The nearer we are to the infection of sin, the more need we have to stand upon our guard. (2.) It was a very rational caution; *let Israel play the harlot*, yet let not Judah do so, for Judah has greater means of knowledge than Israel has, the temple and priesthood, and a king of the house of David. From Judah, Shiloh is to come; and for Judah God has reserved great blessings in store, therefore *let not Judah offend*, for more is expected from them than from Israel, and they will have more to answer for if they do offend; and from them God will take it more unkindly. If *Israel play the harlot*, let not Judah do so too, for then God will have no professing people in the world: God bespeaks Judah here, as Christ doth the twelve, when many turned their backs upon him, *will you also go away?* John vi. 67. Note, Those that have hitherto kept their integrity, should for that reason still hold it fast, even in times of general apostacy.

Now to preserve Judah from offending as Israel had done, two rules are here given. (1.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must keep at a distance from the places of idolatry. *Come not ye unto Gilgal*, there *all their wickedness was*, chap. ix. 15.—xii. 11. there they multiplied transgression. Amos iv. 4. and perhaps they contracted a veneration for that place, because there it was said to Joshua, the place *where thou standest is holy ground*, Josh. v. 15, therefore they are forbidden to enter into Gilgal. Amos v. 5. and for the same reason they must not go up to Bethel, here called the *house of vanity*, for so Bethaven signifies, not the house of God, as Bethel signifies. Note, Those that would be kept from sin, and not fall into the devil's hands must studiously avoid the occasions of sin, and not come upon the devil's ground. (2.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must take heed of profaneness, and not swear, *The Lord liveth*. They are commanded to swear, *The Lord liveth in truth and righteousness*, Jer. iv. 2. and therefore that which is here forbidden, is *swearing* so in untruth and unrighteousness; swearing rashly and lightly, or falsely and with deceit; or swearing by the Lord and the idol, Zeph. i. 5. Note, Those that would be steady in their ad-

herence to God, must possess themselves with an awe and reverence to God, and always speak of him with solemnity and seriousness; for those that can make a jest of the true God, will make a god of any thing.

C H A P. V.

The scope of this chapter is the same as the foregoing chapter, to discover the sin both of Israel and Judah, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. (1.) They are called to hearken to the charge, ver. 1, 8. (2.) They are accused of many sins, which are here aggravated. (1.) Persecution, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Spiritual whoredom, ver. 3, 4. (3.) Pride, ver. 5. (4.) Apostacy from God, ver. 7. (5.) The tyranny of the prince, and the tameness of the people in submitting to it, ver. 10, 11. (3.) They are threatened with God's displeasure for their sins; he knows all their wickedness, ver. 3. and makes known his wrath against them for it, ver. 9. (1.) They shall fall in their iniquity, ver. 5. (2.) God will forsake them, ver. 6. (3.) Their portions shall be devoured, ver. 7. (4.) God will rebuke them and pour out his wrath upon them, ver. 9, 10. (5.) They shall be oppressed, ver. 11. (6.) God will be as a moth to them in secret judgments, ver. 12. and as a lion in public judgments, ver. 14. (4.) They are blamed for the wrong course they took under their afflictions, ver. 13. (5.) It is intimated that they shall at length take a right course, ver. 15. The more generally these things are expressed, of so much the more general use they are for our learning and particularly for our admonition.

1. **H**EAR ye this, O priests: and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2. And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all. 3. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me, for now, Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled. 4. They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD. 5. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them. 6. They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them. 7. They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.

Here, (1.) All orders and degrees of men are cited to appear and answer to such things as shall be laid to their charge, ver. 1. *Hear ye this, O priests*, whether in *holy orders*, as those in Judah, and perhaps many in Israel too, for in the ten tribes there were divers cities of priests and Levites, who, it is probable, staid in their own lot after the revolt of the ten tribes, and did so much of their office, as might be done at a distance from the temple; or *pretending holy orders*, as the priests of the calves, who, some think, are included here. *Hearken, ye house of Israel*, the common people, and *give ear, O house of the king*; let them all take notice, for they have all contributed to the national guilt, and they shall all share in the national judgments. Note, If neither the sanctity of the priesthood, nor the dignity of the royal family will prevail to keep out sin, it cannot be expected they should avail to keep out wrath. If the priests, and the house of the king, though they bear such noble characters, sin like others, their noble characters will not excuse them, but they must smart like others. Nor shall it be any plea for the house of Israel that they were misled by their priests and princes, but they shall receive their doom with them, and neither their meanness nor their multitude shall be their exemption.

(2.) Witness is produced against them; one instead of a thousand, it is God's omniscience; ver. 3. *I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me*. They have not known the Lord, ver. 4. But the Lord has known them; knows their true character, however disguised; knows their secret wickedness however concealed. Note, Men's rejecting the knowledge of God, will not secure them from his knowledge of them: and when he contends with them, he will prove their sins upon them by his own knowledge, so that it will be in vain to plead *not guilty*.

3. Very ill things are laid to their charge. 1. They had been both very ingenious and very industrious to draw people either into sin or into trouble; ye have been *a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor*; ver. 1. i. e. such snares and nets as the huntsmen use to lay upon those mountains in pursuit of their game. When the worship of the calves was set up in Israel, the patrons of that idolatry and sticklers for it, contrived by all possible arts and wiles to draw men into it, and reconcile those to it that at first had a dread of it. Note, those that allure and entice men to sin, however they may pretend friendship and good-will, are to be looked upon as *snares and nets* to them, and *their hands as bands*, Ecclef. vii. 26. But those whom they could not seduce into sin, they were as *a net and a snare* to bring them into trouble. Some think it was their practice to set spies in the road, and particularly upon the mountains of Mizpah and Tabor, at the times of the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, to watch if any of their people who were piously affected went thither, and to inform against them, that they might be prosecuted for it; thus doing the devil's work who *disquiets* those whom he cannot *debauch*.

2. They had been both very crafty and very cruel in carrying on their designs, ver. 2. *The revolvers are profound to make slaughter*. Note, Those that have themselves apostatized from the truths of God, are often the most subtle and barbarous persecutors of those who still adhere to them. Nothing will serve them but to *make slaughter*, it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after, and with the serpents sting they have his head, they are *profound* to do it. O the depth of the depths of Satan, of the wickedness of his agents, of those that have *deeply revolted*, Isa. xxxi. 6. Now that which aggravated this was the many reproofs and warnings that had been given them, *Though I have been a rebuker of them all*, The prophet had been for a reprove by office, he had many a time told them of the evil of their ways and doings, had dealt plainly *with them all*, and had not spared either the priests or the house of the king. God himself had been

been rebuker of them all by their own consciences, and by his providences. Note, Sins against reproof are doubly sinful, *Prov. xxix. 1.*

3. They had committed *whoredom*, had defiled their own bodies with fleshly lusts, had defiled their own souls with the worship of idols, *ver. 3.* This God was a witness to, though secretly committed, and artfully paliated. Nay, the piercing eye of God saw the *spirit of whoredom*, that was in the midst of them; their secret inclination and disposition to those sins, the love they had to their sins, and the dominion their sins had over them; how much they were under the power of a *spirit of whoredom*, that root of bitterness, which bore all this gall and wormwood; that corrupt and poisoned fountain.

4. They have no disposition at all to come into acquaintance and communion with God. The *spirit of whoredoms* having caused them to err from him, keeps them wandering endlessly, *ver. 4.* (1.) They have not known the Lord, nor desire to know him, but have rather declined, nay, decreed the knowledge of him, for that would disturb them in their sinful ways. (2.) Therefore they will not frame their doings to turn to their God, by which it appeared they did not know him aright. It speaks their obstinate persisting in their apostacy from God: they would not turn to God, though he is their God, their's in covenant, by whose name they have been called and whom they are obliged to serve. They would not return to the worship of him, from which they had turned aside. Nay, they would not frame their doings to return to God. They would not consider their ways, nor dispose themselves into a serious temper, nor apply their minds to think of those things that would bring them to God. It is true, we cannot by our own power without the special grace of God turn to him, but we may by the due improvement of our own faculties, and the common aids of his Spirit, frame our doings to turn to him: And those that will not do that, that prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord, *2 Chron. xii. xiv.* it is long of themselves that they are not turned, they die because they will die; and to those that will do this further grace shall not be wanting.

5. They were guilty of notorious arrogance, and insolence in sin. *Ver. 5.* The pride of Israel doth testify to his face, doth witness against him, that he is a rebel to God and his government; the *spirit of whoredoms* which was in the midst of them, shewed itself in the gaiety and gaudiness of their worship, as a harlot is known by her attire, *Prov. vii. 10.* The wantonness of her dress testifies to her face, that she is not a modest woman; or their pride in confronting the prophets God sent them, and the message they brought; *Jer. xliii. 2.* Or a haughty scornful carriage towards their brethren, and those that were under them, this witness against them, that they were not God's people, and justified God in all the humbling judgments he brought upon them. His pride testifies in his face, so some read it, agreeing with *Isa. iii. 9.* The fierceness of their countenance doth witness against them. They have that proud look which the Lord hates.

6. They departed from God to idols, and bred up their children in idolatry; *ver. 7.* They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, as a wife that in contempt of the marriage-covenant forsakes her husband, and lives in adultery with another. Thus they who are guilty of spiritual idolatry, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, deal treacherously against the Lord, they violate their engagements to him, and frustrate his expectations from them. Note, Willful sinners are treacherous dealers. They have begotten strange children, i. e. their children which they have begotten are estranged from God, and trained up in a false way of worship, they are a sponious brood, as children of fornication, *John viii. 41.* whom God will disown. Note, Those deal treacherously with God indeed who not only turn from following him themselves, but train up their children in wicked ways.

4. Very sad things are made to be their doom; in general, *ver. 1.* Judgment is towards you, God is coming forth to contend with you, and to testify his displeasure against you for your sins. It is time to hearken when judgment is towards us. In particular,

1. They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their pride testifying to their face, *ver. 5.* therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity. Note, Pride will have a fall; it is the certain preface and forerunner of it: they that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which pride testifies, shall be filled with confusion. They shall not only fall but fall in their iniquity, the saddest fall of all other. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it. Note, Those that are not humbled for their sins are likely to perish for ever in their sins. It is added, *Judah also shall fall with them* in their iniquity; as the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria for their idolatry, so the two tribes were carried into Babylon for following their ill example; but the former fell and were utterly cast down, the latter fell and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet that shall not secure them, but if they sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall.

2. They shall fall short of God's favour, when they profess to seek it, *ver. 6.* They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but in vain; they shall not find him. This seems to be spoken principally of Judah, when they fell into their iniquity, and when they fell in their iniquity. (1.) When they fell into their iniquity, they sought the Lord, but they did not seek him only, and therefore he was not found of them. When they worshipped strange gods, and they kept up the shew and shadow of the worship of the true God; they went as usual at the solemn feasts with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but their hearts were not upright with him, because they were not entire for him, and therefore he would not accept them; for then only shall we find him, when we seek him with our whole heart; not divided between God and Baal, *Ezek. xiv. 3.* (2.) When they fell in their iniquity, or found themselves falling by it, they sought the Lord, but they did not seek him early, and therefore he will not be found of them. They shall see ruin coming upon them, and shall then in their distress flee to God, and think to make him their friend with burnt offerings and sacrifices, but it will be too late then to turn away his wrath, when the decree is gone forth. Even Josiah's reformation did not prevail to turn away the wrath of God, *2 Kings xxiii. 25, 26.* Those that go with their flocks and their herds only to seek the Lord, and not with their hearts and souls, cannot expect to find him, for his favour is not to be purchased with thousands of rams. Nor shall those speed who do not seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found. They shall not find him for he hath withdrawn himself, he will not be enquired of by them; but will turn a deaf ear to their prayers, and have no regard to the sacrifices. See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now while he accepted time is, and the day of salvation.

3. They and their portions shall all be swallowed up. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, and have thought to strengthen themselves in it by their alliances with strange children, but now shall a month devour them with their portions, i. e. their estates and inheritances, all those things which they have taken, and taken up with as their portion. Or their portions, i. e. their idols whom they chose for their portion instead of God. Note, They that make an idol of the world by taking it for their portion with themselves perish with it. A month shall devour them, or

eat them up, i. e. a certain time prefixed, and a short time. When God's judgments begin with them they shall soon make an end, one month will do their business. How much may a body be weakened by one month's sickness, or a kingdom wasted by one month's war, *three sheph' rds* (1st God) I cut off in one month, *Zech. xi. 8.* Note, The judgments of God sometimes make quick work with a sinful people. A month devours more and more portions than many years can repair.

8. Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin. 9. Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. 10. The princes of Judah were like them that removed the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. 11. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment. 12. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. 13. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. 14. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. 15. ¶ I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Here is, 1. A loud alarm sounded, giving notice of judgments coming, *ver. 8.* Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and in Ramah, two cities near together in the confines of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Gibeah a frontier town of the kingdom of Judah, Ramah of Israel; so that the warning is hereby sent into both kingdoms; Cry aloud at Beth-aven, or Bethel, which place seems to be already seized upon by the enemy, and therefore the trumpet is not sounded there, but you hear the outcries of them that shout for mastery, mixed with their's that are overcome. Let them cry aloud: After thee, O Benjamin, comes the enemy. The tribe of Ephraim is already vanquished, and the enemy will be upon thy back. O Benjamin, in a little time, thy turn comes next. The cup of trembling shall go round. The prophet had described God's controversy with them as a trial at law, *chap. iv. 1.* Here he describes it as a trial by battle, and here also when he judgeth he will overcome; let all therefore prepare to meet their God. He had before spoken of the judgments as certain, here he speaks of them as near; and when they are apprehended as just at the door, they are very startling and awakening. The blowing of this cornet is explained, *ver. 9.* among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be; that which is true or certain, so the word is. Note, The destruction of impenitent sinners is a thing which shall surely be; it is not mere talk to frighten them, but it is an irrevocable sentence. And it is a mercy to us that it is made known to us, that we have timely warning given us of it, that we may flee from the wrath to come. It is the privilege of the tribes of Israel, that as they are told their duty, so they are told their danger by the oracles of God committed to them.

The ground of God's controversy with them. 1. He has a quarrel with the princes of Judah, because they were during leaders in sin, *ver. 10.* They are like them that remove the bound, or the ancient landmarks; God hath given them his law to be a fence about his own property; but they have sacrilegiously broken through it and set it aside; they have encroached even upon God's rights, have trampled upon the distinctions between good and evil, and the most sacred obligations of reason and equity, thinking because they were princes their will was a law, and they might do any thing, *quicquid libet, licet.* Or it may be understood of their invading the liberty and property of the subject, for the advancing of the prerogative, which was like removing the ancient landmarks. Some have observed, that the princes of Judah were more absolute and assumed a more arbitrary power than the princes of Israel did; now for this God has a controversy with them; I will pour out my wrath upon them like water, in great abundance, like the waters of the flood, which were poured upon the giants of the old world, for the violence which the earth was filled with through them, *Gen. vi. 13.* Note, There are bounds which even princes themselves must not remove, bounds both of religion and justice, which they are limited by; and which if they break through they must know that there is a God above them, that will call them to account for it.

2. He has a quarrel with the people of Ephraim, because they were sneaking followers in sin; *ver. 11.* He willingly walked after the commandment, i. e. the commandment of Jeroboam and the succeeding kings of Israel, who obliged all their subjects by a law to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel, and never to go up to Jerusalem to worship; this was the commandment, it was the law of the land, and backed with reasons of state, and the people not only walked after it in a blind implicit obedience to authority, but they willingly walked after it, from a secret antipathy they had to the worship of God, and a strong bias to the worship of idols. Note, An easy compliance with the commandments of men that thwart the commandments of God, ripens a people for ruin as much as any thing else. And the punishment of the sequacious disobedience (if I may so call it) answers the sin; for it is for this that Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; has all his civil rights and liberties broken in upon and trodden down: And, (1.) It is just with God it should be so; that those who betray God's property should lose their own; that those who subject their consciences to an infallible judge and an arbitrary power, should have enough of both. (2.) There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it; they that willingly walk after the commandment, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it, the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a malignant-like tyranny that is fierce and furious, than a spaniel-like submission that is fawning and flattering. Thus is Ephraim oppressed and broken in judgment, i. e. he is wronged under a face and colour of right. Note, It is a sad and fore judgment upon any people to be oppressed under pretence of having justice done them. This explains the threatening, *ver. 9.* Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke. Note, Daring sinners must expect that a day of rebuke will come, and such a day of rebuke as will make them desolate; will deprive them of the comfort of all they have, and all they hope for.

3. The different methods that God would take both with Judah and Ephraim, sometimes one method, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both

both together. Or rather by which, first the one and then the other, he would advance towards their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with lesser judgments, which should sometimes work *silently and insensibly*, ver. 12. *I will be, i. e. my providences shall be unto Ephraim as a moth*, nay, (as it might better be supplied) *they are unto Ephraim as a moth*, for it is such a *sickness*, as Ephraim now feels. ver. 13. Note, The judgments of God are sometimes to a sinful people as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies the little animals that breed in clothes, the latter those that breed in wood; as these consume the clothes and the wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them. (1.) *Silently*, so as not to make any noise in the world, nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it; they shall think themselves safe and thriving, but when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying. (2.) *Slowly*, and with long delays and intervals, that he may give them *space to repent*. Many a nation, as well as many a person in the prime of its time dies of a consumption. (3.) *Gradually*, God comes upon sinners with lesser judgments so to prevent greater, if they will be wise and take warning, comes upon them step by step, to shew he is not willing they should perish. (4.) The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm or rottenness in the wood; thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared those had not done their work, he would come upon them with greater, ver. 14. *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion*, and to the house of Judah as a young lion, though Judah is himself in Jacob's blessing a *lion's whelp*. Let any should think his power weakened, because he was said to be as a moth to them, he saith he will now be as a lion to them, not only to frighten them with his roaring, but to pull them to pieces. Note, If lesser judgments prevail not to do their work, it may be expected that God will send greater. Christ is sometimes a lion of the tribe of Judah, here he is a lion against that tribe; see what God will do to a people that are secure in sin, even *I will tear*. He is to glory in it as his prerogative to be able to *destroy*, as the *alone living*, Jam. iv. 12. *I, even I, will take the work into my own hands; I say it that will do it*. There is a more immediate work of God in time judgments than in others. *I will bear and go away*. He will go away, (1.) As not fearing them; he will go away in state, and with a majestic face, as the lion from his prey. (2.) As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if he *tear and go away*; if when he deprives us of our creature comforts he doth himself depart from us. When he goes away, he will take away all that is valuable and dear, for when God goes all good goes along with him. He will take away and none shall rescue him; as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion, Mic. v. 8. Note, None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice, but those that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

4. The different effects of those different methods.

1. When God contended with them by lesser judgments, they neglected him and sought to creatures for relief, but sought in vain, ver. 13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness, they perceived their sickness, and their wound, after a while they found themselves going down the wind, and that they were behind-hand in their affairs, their state was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian to come in to their assistance, made their court to king Jareb, which, some think, was one of the names of Pul or Tiglathpileser, kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied themselves for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests. Note, Carnal hearts in time of trouble see their sickness, and see their wound, but do not see the sin that is the cause of it, nor will be brought to acknowledge that; no, nor to acknowledge the hand of God, his mighty hand, much less his righteous hand in their trouble; and therefore instead of going the next way to the Creator that could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures that can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins, are loth to be beholden to him in their afflictions, but would rather seek relief any where than with him. And what comes of it? *Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound*. Note, Those who neglect God and seek to creatures for help will certainly be disappointed; that depend upon them for support will find them not *foundations* but *broken reeds*, that depend upon them for supply, will find them not *fountains* but *broken cisterns*; that depend upon them for comfort and a cure, will find them *miserable comforters* and *physicians of no value*. The kings of Assyria, whom Judah and Israel sought unto, distressed them and helped them not, 2 Chron. xxvii. 16—21. Some make king Jared to signify the great, potent, or magnificent king, for they built much upon his power: others the king that would plead, or should plead, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and in the interesting himself in their affairs: they had sent him a present, chap. x. 6. a good fee, and having so retained him of counsel for them they doubted not of his fidelity to them, but he deceived them as an arm of flesh doth those that trust in it, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2. When to convince them of their folly God brought greater judgments upon them, then they would at length be forced to apply themselves to him; ver. 15. When he has torn us as a lion, (1.) He will leave them; *I will go and return to my place*, i. e. to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory: When God punisheth sinners he comes out of his place, Isa. xxvi. 21. but when he designs them favour he returns to his place, where he waits to be gracious upon their submission. Or he will return to his place when he has corrected them, as not regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers; and this for their further humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the returns of his favour. (2.) He will at length work upon them and bring them home to himself by their afflictions; which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their offence; (1.) Their penitent confession of sin, till they acknowledge their offence; marg. *Till they be guilty*, i. e. till they be sensible of their guilt, and are brought to own it, and humble themselves before God for it. Note, When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions; then there begins to be some hope of them; and this is that which God requires of us when we are under his correcting hand, that we own ourselves in a fault, and justly corrected. (2.) Their humble petition for the favour of God; till they seek his face, which it may be expected they will do when they are brought to the last extremity, and they have tried other helpers in vain. In their affliction they will seek me early, i. e. diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity; and if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, though it might be called seeking him late, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet is not too late, nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him early, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him. Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face; i. e. we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in token of his being at peace with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a

distance. Therefore God for a time turns away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray*.

CHAP. VI.

The closing words of the foregoing chapter, gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, notwithstanding their sins and his wrath, might yet be happily brought together again; that they would seek him and he would be found of them; now this chapter carries that matter further, and some join the beginning of this chapter with the end of that, they will seek me early, saying, Come and let us return; but God doth again complain of the wickedness of this people, for though some did repent and reform, the greater part continued obstinate. Observe (1.) Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith they encourage themselves in their return, ver. 1—3. (2.) The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The covenant God made with them, and his expectations from them, ver. 6. and their violation of that covenant, and frustrating those expectations, ver. 7—11.

1. COME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

These may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people calling them to repentance, or as the words of the people to one another, exciting and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said, in their affliction they would seek him; now the prophet and the good people his friends would strike while the iron was hot; and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, those who are disposed to turn to God themselves, should do all they can to excite and engage and encourage others to return to him. Observe,

1. What it is they engage to do. Come, and let us return to the Lord, ver. 1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jareb, we have enough of that, but let us return to the Lord: Return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and to our hope in him from all our confidences in the creature. Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God to return to him. And those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body drawing one another to sin, should by consent and in a body return to him, which will be for his glory and their mutual edification.

2. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir up one another with.

1. The experience they had had of his displeasure. Let us return to him, for he has torn, he hath smitten, we have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we have been smitten, and it was he that smote us; therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect he should be reconciled to us till we do return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him; and his hand will be stretched out still against us, if the people turn not to him that smiteth them, Isa. ix. 12, 13. Note, the consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are tearing judgments, should awaken us to return to God by repentance and prayer and reformation.

2. The expectation they had of his favour. He that has torn will heal us, that hath smitten will bind us up; as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people relieves them, and the same Spirit of God that convinceth the saints comfort them; that which is first a Spirit of bondage is afterwards a Spirit of adoption. This is an acknowledgment of the power of God, he can heal though we be never so ill torn; and of his mercy he will do it; nay, therefore he has torn that he may heal. Some think this points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord and joined themselves to him in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy. Note, It will be of great use to us both for our support under our afflictions, and for our encouragement in our repentance, to keep up good thoughts of God and of his purposes and designs concerning us.

Now this favour of God which they are here in expectation of is described in several instances.

1. They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles shall be to them as life from the dead, ver. 2. After two days he will revive us, i. e. in a short time, in a day or two, and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrify and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, i. e. we shall see his face with comfort, and it shall be reviving to us. Though he forsake for a small moment, he will gather with everlasting kindness. Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so; nor shall they long lie so; God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return and adhere to him. But this seems to have a further reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by the two days and the third day; that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the third day, which he is said to do according to the Scriptures, according to this scripture; for all the prophets witnessed of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophet's words so as that when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles, he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures of and fruits of; and though they might not be aware of this mystery in the words, yet now they are fulfilled in the letter of them in the resurrection of Christ, it is a confirmation to our faith, that this is he that should come and we are to look for no other. And it is agreeable enough that a prophecy of Christ's rising should be thus expressed, he will raise us up, and we shall live, for Christ rose as the first-fruits and we revive with him, we live through him; he rose for our justification, and all believers are said to be risen with Christ. See 1 Ju. xxvi. 19. And it would serve for a comfort to the church then, and an assurance that God would raise them out of their low estate, for in his fullness of time he would raise his Son from the grave, who would be the life

and glory of his people Israel. Note, A regard by faith to a *rising Christ* is a great support to a *suffering Christian*, and gives abundant encouragement to a repenting, returning sinner; for he hath said, *Because I live, you shall live also*.

2. That then they shall improve in the knowledge of God, ver. 3. *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.* Then when God returns in mercy to his people, and designs favour for them, he will as a pledge and fruit of his favour give them more of the knowledge of himself; the earth shall be full of that knowledge, Isa. xi. 9. *Knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii. 4. *all shall know God*, Jer. xxxi. 34. *we shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord*; so the words are. And it may be taken as the fruit of Christ's resurrection and the life we live in God's sight by him, that we shall have not only greater means of knowledge, but grace to improve in knowledge by those means. Note, When God designs mercy for a people, he gives them a heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. They that are *risen with Christ* have the spirit of wisdom and revelation given them. And if we understand our *living in his sight*, as the Chaldee paraphrast doth, of the day of the resurrection of the dead, it fitly follows, *we shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord*, for in that day we shall see him as he is; and our knowledge of him shall be perfected, and yet be eternally increasing. Or taking it as we read it, *if we follow on to know*; we have here, (1.) A precious blessing promised; *then shall we know, shall know the Lord*. Then when we return to God; those that come to God shall be brought into an acquaintance with him. When we are designed to *live in his sight*, then he gives us to know him; for this is *life eternal to know God*, John xvii. 3. (2.) The way and means of obtaining this blessing. We must *follow on to know him*. We must value and esteem the knowledge of God, as the best knowledge, we must *cry after it*, and *dig for it*, Prov. xviii. 1. and must proceed in our enquiries after this knowledge, and our endeavours to improve in it. And if we do the prescribed duty we have reason to expect the promised mercy, that we shall know more and more of God, and be at last perfect in his knowledge.

3. That then they shall abound in divine consolations. *His going forth is prepared as the morning*, i. e. the returns of his favour, which he had withdrawn from us, when he went and returned to his place. His *out-goings* again, are prepared and secured to us as firmly as the return of the morning after a dark night, and we expect it, as those do that wait for the morning after a long night, and are sure it will come at the time appointed, and will not fail; and the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us, and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. *He shall come to us*, and be welcome to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refresheth it, and makes it fruitful. Now this looks farther than their deliverance out of captivity, and no doubt was to have its full accomplishment in Christ, and the grace of the gospel. The Old Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and at length the out-goings of divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world were, (1.) As the morning to this earth when it is dark; for he went forth as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us. His going forth was prepared as the morning, for he came in the fulness of time; John Baptist was his forerunner, nay, he was himself the bright and morning star. (2.) As the rain to this earth when it is dry; he shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass, Psal. lxxii. 6. And in him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, Isa. lv. 10. And the favour of God in Christ is what is said of the king's favour, like the cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15. The grace of God in Christ is both the latter and the former rain, for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

4. ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. 5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets: I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt offerings. 7. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. 8. Gilad is a city of them that work iniquity; and is polluted with blood. 9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness. 10. I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11. Also O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Two things, two ill things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of.

1. That they were not firm to their own conviction; but were unsteady, unstable as water, ver. 4, 5. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? This is a strange expression, can infinite wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be nonplus'd, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to shew how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were. Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe in tearing them, and smiteth them, as he has done, for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them, what could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done? Isa. v. 4. and very loth he was to let things go to extremity; he reasons with himself, as chap. xi. 8, 9. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* God would have done them good but they were not qualified for it; what shall I do unto thee? What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honour save thee? Note, God never destroys sinners till he sees there is no other way with them.

See here (1.) What their carriage was towards God. Their goodness or kindness was as the morning cloud. Some understand it of their kindness to themselves and their own souls in their repentance; it is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins, but they soon retracted that kindness to themselves, undid it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever; but it is rather taken for their piety and religion, what good appeared in them sometimes, it soon vanished and disappeared again; as the morning cloud and the early dew. Such was the goodness of Israel in Jehu's time, and of Judah in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time

of drought the morning cloud promiseth rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth, but the cloud is dispersed (and hypocrites are compared to clouds without water, Jude. 12.) the dew doth not soak into the ground, but is drawn back again into the air, and the earth is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passeth away; and *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*. Note, That goodness will never be either pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, which is as the morning cloud and the early dew. When men promise fair and do not perform, when they begin well in religion, and do not hold on, when they leave their first love, and their first works, or though they do not quite cast off religion, yet are unsteady, uneven and inconsistent in it, then is their goodness as the morning cloud and the early dew.

(2.) What course God had taken with them, ver. 5. therefore because they were so rough and ill-shapen, I have hewed them by the prophets, as timber of stone are hewed for use, i. e. I have slain them with the words of my mouth. What the prophets did was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart, when they dealt faithfully with them. (1.) The prophets hewed them by convictions of sin, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion, ver. 4. therefore God hewed them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which requires a great deal of pains to bring it into shape; or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a deal of difficulty; ministers work is to hew them, and God by the minister hews them, for with the froward he will shew himself froward. And there are those whom ministers must rebuke sharply; every word should cut, and though the chips fly in the face of the workman, though the reproved fly in the face of the reprove, and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work. (2.) They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezekiel is said to destroy the city when he prophesied of the destruction of it, Ezek. xliii. 3. And God accomplished that which was foretold; I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth. Note, The word of God will be either the death of the sin, or the death of the sinner; a favour either of death unto life, or of death unto death. Some read it, *I have hewed the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth*, i. e. I have employed them in laborious service for the peoples good, which has wasted their strength, they have spent themselves and hewed away all their spirits in their work; and in hazardous service, which has cost many of them their lives. Note, Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people, and though with many they labour in vain, yet God will reckon for the wearing out of his tools. (3.) God was hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterwards. His prophets had taken a deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin, and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect; some good impressions perhaps were made for the present, but they wore off and passed away as the morning cloud, and now they cannot charge God with severity, if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him and acknowledgeth, thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth; evidently just and righteous. Note, Though sinners be not reclaimed by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. See Matt. xi. 17, 18, 19.

2. That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, ver. 6, 7, &c. Where observe,

1. What the covenant was that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour and be accepted of him. Ver. 6. *I desired mercy and not sacrifice*, i. e. rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt offerings. Mercy here is the same word which we rendered goodness, ver. 4. *chewed*, piety, sanctity, it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour. And this accompanied with and flowing from the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm believe that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, a good affection to divine things, guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation; this is that which God by his covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offerings. This is fully explained, Jer. vii. 22, 23. *I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings*, that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid, but this I said, *Obey my voice*, Micah vi. 6, 7, 8. to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice, Mark xii. 33. Psal. li. 16, 17. Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him, but without them God regarded them not, he despised them, Isa. i. 10, 11. Perhaps this is mentioned here to shew a difference between the God whom they deserted and the gods whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing; but that they should be good men, and live good lives for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false gods required that only, let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they list; what fools were they then that left a God who aimed at giving his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name. It is mentioned likewise to shew that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices; *I will not reprove thee for them*, Psal. l. 8. but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God among them, chap. iv. 1. And to teach us all, that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and separate from that the performances of devotion, though never so plausible, never so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this to shew that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals, whenever they come in competition; and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the sabbath-day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating and the sabbath rest must give way, Matt. ix. 13.—xii. 7.

2. How little they had regarded this covenant. Though it was so well ordered in all things, though they and not God would be the gainers by it; yet see here what came of it.

1. In general they broke with God and proved unfaithful; there were good things committed to them to keep, the jewels of mercy and piety, and the knowledge of God in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt-offering, but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratifications of a base lust; and this is that for which God has justly quarrel with them, ver. 7. *they like men have transgressed the covenant*, that covenant which God made with them, they have broken the conditions of it, and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting off mercy and the knowledge of God, and other instances of disobedience, (1.) They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; they were like men that transgress a

both together. Or rather by which, first the one and then the other, he would advance towards their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with lesser judgments, which should sometimes work *silently and insensibly*, ver. 12. *I will be*, i. e. my providences shall be unto Ephraim as a moth, nay, (as it might better be supplied) they are unto Ephraim as a moth, for it is such a sickness, as Ephraim now feels, ver. 13. Note, The judgments of God are sometimes to a sinful people as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies the little animals that breed in clothes, the latter those that breed in wood; as these consume the clothes and the wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them. (1.) *Silently*, so as not to make any noise in the world, nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it; they shall think themselves safe and thriving, but when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying. (2.) *Slowly*, and with long delays and intervals, that he may give them space to repent. Many a nation, as well as many a person in the prime of its time dies of a consumption. (3.) *Gradually*, God comes upon sinners with lesser judgments so to prevent greater, if they will be wise and take warning, comes upon them step by step, to shew he is not willing they should perish. (4.) The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm or rottenness in the wood; thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared those had not done their work, he would come upon them with greater, ver. 14. *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion*, and to the house of Judah as a young lion, though Judah is himself in Jacob's blessing a lion's whelp. Left any should think his power weakened, because he was said to be as a moth to them, he saith he will now be as a lion to them, not only to frighten them with his roaring, but to pull them to pieces. Note, If lesser judgments prevail not to do their work, it may be expected that God will send greater. Christ is sometimes a lion of the tribe of Judah, here he is a lion against that tribe; see what God will do to a people that are secure in sin, even *I will tear*. He is as to glory in it as his prerogative to be able to destroy, as the alone *Living*, Jam. iv. 12. *Even I, I will take the work into my own hands; I say it that will do it*. There is a more immediate work of God in some judgments than in others. *I will bear and go away*. He will go away, (1.) As not fearing them; he will go away in state, and with a majestic face as the lion from his prey. (2.) As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if he *tear and go away*; if when he deprives us of our creature comforts he doth himself depart from us. When he goes away, he will take away all that is valuable and dear, for when God goes all good goes along with him. He will take away and none shall rescue him; as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion, Mic. vi. 8. Note, None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice, but he that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

4. The different effects of those different methods.

1. When God contended with them by lesser judgments, they neglected him and sought to erect res for relief, but sought in vain, ver. 13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness, they perceived their sickness, and their wound, after a while they found themselves going down the wind, and that they were behind-hand in their affairs, their state was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian to come in to their assistance, made their court to king Jereb, which, some think, was one of the names of Pul or Tiglathpileser, kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied themselves for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests. Note, Carnal hearts in time of trouble see their sickness, and see their wound, but do not see the sin that is the cause of it, nor will be brought to acknowledge that; no, nor to acknowledge the hand of God, his mighty hand, much less his righteous hand in their trouble; and therefore instead of going the next way to the Creator that could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures that can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins, are loth to be beholden to him in their afflictions, but would rather seek relief any where than with him. And what comes of it? *Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound*. Note, Those who neglect God and seek to creatures for help will certainly be disappointed; that depend upon them for support will find them not foundations but broken reeds, that depend upon them for supply, will find them not fountains but broken cisterns; that depend upon them for comfort and a cure, will find them miserable comforters and physicians of no value. The kings of Assyria, whom Judah and Israel sought unto, distressed them and helped them not, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16—21. Some make king Jared to signify the great, potent, or magnificent king, for they built much upon his power; others the king that would plead, or should plead, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and in the interesting himself in their affairs: they had sent him a present, chap. x. 6. a good tree, and having so retained him of course for them they doubted not of his fidelity to them, but he deceived them as an arm of flesh doth those that trust in it, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2. When to convince them of their folly God brought greater judgments upon them, then they would at length be forced to apply themselves to him; ver. 15. When he has torn as a lion, (1.) He will leave them; *I will go and return to my place*, i. e. to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory: When God punisheth sinners he comes out of his place, Isa. xxvi. 21, but when he designs them favour he returns to his place, where he wait, to be gracious upon their submission. Or he will return to his place when he has corrected them, as not regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers; and this for their further humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the returns of his favour. (2.) He will at length work upon them and bring them home to himself by their afflictions; which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their return; (1.) Their penitent confession of sin, till they acknowledge their offence; marg. *Till they be guilty*, i. e. till they be sensible of their guilt, and are brought to own it, and humble themselves before God for it. Note, When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions; then there begins to be some hope of them; and this is that which God requires of us when we are under his correcting hand, that we own ourselves in a fault, and justly corrected. (2.) Their humble petition for the favour of God; till they seek his face, which it may be expected they will do when they are brought to the last extremity, and they have tried other helpers in vain. In their affliction they will seek me early, i. e. diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity; and if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, though it might be called seeking him late, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet is not too late, nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him early, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him. Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face; i. e. we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in token of his being at peace with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a

distance. Therefore God for a time turns away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.

CHAP. VI.

The closing words of the foregoing chapter, gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, notwithstanding their sins and his wrath, might yet be happily brought together again; that they would seek him and he would be found of them; now this chapter carries that matter farther, and some join the beginning of this chapter with the end of that, they will seek me early, saying, Come and let us return; but God doth again complain of the wickedness of this people, for though some did repent and reform, the greater part continued obstinate. Observe (1.) Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith they encourage themselves in their return, ver. 1—3. (2.) The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The covenant God made with them, and his expectations from them, ver. 6. and their violation of that covenant, and frustrating those expectations, ver. 7—11.

1. COME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

These may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people calling them to repentance, or as the words of the people to one another, exciting and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said, in their affliction they would seek him; now the prophet and the good people his friends would strike while the iron was hot; and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, those who are disposed to turn to God themselves, should do all they can to excite and engage and encourage others to return to him. Observe,

1. What it is they engage to do. Come, and let us return to the Lord, ver. 1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jereb, we have enough of that, but let us return to the Lord: Return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and to our hope in him from all our confidences in the creature. Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God to return to him. And those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body drawing one another to sin, should by consent and in a body return to him, which will be for his glory and their mutual edification.

2. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir up one another with.

1. The experience they had had of his displeasure. Let us return to him, for he has torn, he hath smitten, we have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we have been smitten, and it was he that smote us; therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect he should be reconciled to us till we do return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him; and his hand will be stretched out still against us, if the people turn not to him that smiteth them, Isa. ix. 12, 13. Note, the consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are tearing judgments, should awaken us to return to God by repentance and prayer and reformation.

2. The expectation they had of his favour. He that has torn will heal us, that hath smitten will bind us up; as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people relieves them, and the same Spirit of God that convinceth the saints comforteth them; that which is first a Spirit of bondage is afterwards a Spirit of adoption. This is an acknowledgment of the power of God, he can heal though we be never so ill torn; and of his mercy he will do it; nay, therefore he has torn that he may heal. Some think this points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord and joined themselves to him in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy. Note, It will be of great use to us both for our support under our afflictions, and for our encouragement in our repentance, to keep up good thoughts of God and of his purposes and designs concerning us.

Now this favour of God which they are here in expectation of is described in several instances.

1. They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles shall be to them as life from the dead, ver. 2. After two days he will revive us, i. e. in a short time, in a day or two, and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrify and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, i. e. we shall see his face with comfort, and it shall be reviving to us. Though he forsake for a small moment, he will gather up everlasting kindness. Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so; nor shall they long lie so; God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return and adhere to him. But this seems to have a further reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by the two days and the third day, that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the third day, which he is said to do according to the Scriptures, according to this scripture; for all the prophets witnessed of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophet's words so; as that when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles, he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures of and fruits of; and though they might not be aware of this mystery in the words, yet now they are fulfilled in the letter of them in the resurrection of Christ, it is a confirmation to our faith, that this is he that should come and we are to look for no other. And it is agreeable enough that a prophecy of Christ's rising should be thus expressed, he will raise us up, and we shall live, for Christ rose as the first-fruits, and we revive with him, we live through him; he rose for our justification, and all believers are said to be risen with Christ. See Isa. xxvi. 19. And it would serve for a comfort to the church then, and an assurance that God would raise them out of their low estate, for in his fullness of time he would raise his Son from the grave, who would be the life

and glory of his people Israel. Note, A regard by faith to a *rising Christ* is a great support to a *suffering Christian*, and gives abundant encouragement to a repenting, returning sinner; for he hath said, *Because I live, you shall live also*.

2. That then they shall improve in the knowledge of God, ver. 3. *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.* Then when God returns in mercy to his people, and designs favour for them, he will as a pledge and fruit of his favour give them more of the knowledge of himself; the earth shall be full of that knowledge, Isa. xi. 9. *Knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii. 4. *all shall know God*, Jer. xxxi. 34. *we shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord*; so the words are. And it may be taken as the fruit of Christ's resurrection and the life we live in God's sight by him, that we shall have not only greater means of knowledge, but grace to improve in knowledge by those means. Note, When God designs mercy for a people, he gives them a heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. They that are *risen with Christ* have the spirit of wisdom and revelation given them. And if we understand our *living in his sight*, as the Chaldee paraphrast doth, of the day of the resurrection of the dead, it fitly follows, *we shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord*, for in that day we shall see him as he is; and our knowledge of him shall be perfected, and yet be eternally increasing. Or taking it as we read it, *if we follow on to know*; we have here, (1.) A precious blessing promised; *then shall we know, shall know the Lord*. Then when we return to God; those that come to God shall be brought into an acquaintance with him. When we are designed to *live in his sight*, then he gives us to know him; for this is *life eternal to know God*, John xvii. 3. (2.) The way and means of obtaining this blessing. We must *follow on to know him*. We must value and esteem the knowledge of God, as the best knowledge, we must *cry after it*, and *dig for it*, Prov. xviii. 1. and must proceed in our enquiries after this knowledge, and our endeavours to improve in it. And if we do the prescribed duty we have reason to expect the promised mercy, that we shall know more and more of God, and be at last perfect in his knowledge.

3. That then they shall abound in divine consolations. *His going forth is prepared as the morning*, i. e. the returns of his favour, which he had withdrawn from us, when he went and returned to his place. His *out-goings* again, are prepared and secured to us as firmly as the return of the morning after a dark night, and we expect it, as those do that wait for the morning after a long night, and are sure it will come at the time appointed, and will not fail; and the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us, and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. *He shall come to us*, and be welcome to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refresheth it, and makes it fruitful. Now this looks further than their deliverance out of captivity, and no doubt was to have its full accomplishment in Christ, and the grace of the gospel. The Old Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and at length the *out-goings* of divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world were, (1.) *As the morning* to this earth when it is dark; for he went forth as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us. *His going forth was prepared as the morning*, for he came in the fulness of time; John Baptist was his forerunner, nay, he was himself the bright and morning star. (2.) *As the rain* to this earth when it is dry; he shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass, Psal. lxxii. 6. And in him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, Isa. lv. 10. And the favour of God in Christ is what is said of the king's favour, *like the cloud of the latter rain*, Prov. xvi. 15. The grace of God in Christ is both the latter and the former rain, for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

4. ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. 5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets: I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt offerings. 7. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. 8. Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity; and is polluted with blood. 9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness. 10. I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11. Also O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Two things, two ill things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of.

1. That they were not firm to their own conviction; but were unsteady, unstable as water, ver. 4, 5. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? This is a strange expression, can infinite wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be nonplus'd, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to shew how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were. Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe in tearing them, and smiting them, as he has done, for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them, what could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done? Isa. v. 4. and very loth he was to let things go to extremity; he reasons with himself, as chap. xi. 8, 9. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? God would have done them good but they were not qualified for it; what shall I do unto thee? What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honour save thee?* Note, God never destroys sinners till he sees there is no other way with them.

See here (1.) What their carriage was towards God. Their goodness or kindness was as the morning cloud. Some understand it of their kindness to themselves and their own souls in their repentance; it is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins, but they soon retracted that kindness to themselves, undid it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever; but it is rather taken for their piety and religion, what good appeared in them sometimes, it soon vanished and disappeared again; as the morning cloud and the early dew. Such was the goodness of Israel in Jehu's time, and of Judah in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time No. CXXI.

of drought the morning cloud promiseth rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth, but the cloud is dispersed (and hypocrites are compared to clouds without water, Jude 12.) the dew doth not sink into the ground, but is drawn back again into the air, and the earth is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passeth away; and *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*. Note, That goodness will never be either pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, which is as the morning cloud and the early dew. When men promise fair and do not perform, when they begin well in religion, and do not hold on, when they leave their first love, and their first works, or though they do not quite cast off religion, yet are unsteady, uneven and inconstant in it, then is their goodness as the morning cloud and the early dew.

(2.) What course God had taken with them, ver. 5. therefore because they were so rough and ill-shapen, I have hewed them by the prophets, as timber or stone are hewed for use, i. e. I have slain them with the words of my mouth. What the prophets did was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart, when they dealt faithfully with them. (1.) The prophets hewed them by *convictions of sin*, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion, ver. 4. therefore God hewed them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which requires a great deal of pains to bring it into shape; or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a deal of difficulty; ministers work is to hew them, and God by the minister hews them, for with the sword he will shew himself forward. And there are those whom ministers must hew sharply; every word should cut, and though the chips fly in the face of the workman, though the reproved fly in the face of the reprove, and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work. (2.) They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezekiel is said to destroy the city when he prophesied of the destruction of it, Ezek. xliii. 3. And God accomplished that which was foretold; I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth. Note, The word of God will be either the death of the sin, or the death of the sinner; a favour either of death unto life, or of death unto death. Some read it, *I have hewed the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth*, i. e. I have employed them in laborious service for the peoples good, which has wasted their strength, they have spent themselves and hewed away all their spirits in their work; and in hazardous service, which has cost many of them their lives. Note, Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people, and though with many they labour in vain, yet God will reckon for the wearing out of his tools. (3.) God was hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterwards. His prophets had taken a deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin, and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect; some good impressions perhaps were made for the present, but they wore off and passed away as the morning cloud, and now they cannot charge God with severity, if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him and acknowledgeth, *thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth*; evidently just and righteous. Note, Though sinners be not reclaimed by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. See Matt. xi. 17, 18, 19.

2. That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, ver. 6, 7, &c. Where observe,

1. What the covenant was that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour and be accepted of him. Ver. 6. *I desired mercy and not sacrifice*, i. e. rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt offerings. Mercy here is the same word which we rendered goodness, ver. 4. *checed*, piety, sanctity, it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour. And this accompanied with and flowing from the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm believe that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, a good affection to divine things, guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation; this is that which God by his covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offerings. This is fully explained, Jer. vii. 22, 23. *I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings*, that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid, but this I said, *Obey my voice*, Micah vi. 6, 7, 8. to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice, Mark xii. 33. Psal. li. 16, 17. Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him, but without them God regarded them not, he despised them, Isa. i. 10, 11. Perhaps this is mentioned here to shew a difference between the God whom they deserted and the gods whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing; but that they should be good men, and live good lives for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false gods required that only, let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they list; what fools were they then that left a God who aimed at giving his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name. It is mentioned likewise to shew that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices, *I will not reprove thee for them*, Psal. l. 8. but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God among them, chap. iv. 1. And to teach us all, that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and separate from that the performances of devotion, though never so plausible, never so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this to shew that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals, whenever they come in competition; and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the sabbath-day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating and the sabbath rest must give way, Matt. ix. 13.—xii. 7.

2. How little they had regarded this covenant. Though it was so well ordered in all things, though they and not God would be the gainers by it; yet see here what came of it.

1. In general they broke with God and proved unfaithful; there were good things committed to them to keep, the jewels of mercy and piety, and the knowledge of God in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt-offering, but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratifications of a base lust, and this is that for which God has justly a quarrel with them, ver. 7. *they like men have transgressed the covenant*, that covenant which God made with them, they have broken the conditions of it; and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting off mercy and the knowledge of God, and other instances of disobedience, (1.) They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; they were like men that transgressed a covenant.

Covenant by which they had solemnly bound themselves, which is a thing that all the world cries out shame on; *men* that have done so deserve not again to be valued, or trusted or dealt with. *There*, in that thing, *they have dealt treacherously against me*; they have been perfidious, base, and false children, in whom is no faith, though I depended upon their being children that would not lie. (2.) In this they had but acted like themselves, like men, who are generally false and fickle, and in whose nature, i. e. their corrupt nature, it is to deal treacherously; *all men are liars*, and they are like the rest of that degenerate race, *all gone aside*; Psal. xiv. 2, 3. They have transgressed the covenant like men. i. e. like the Gentiles that transgressed the covenant of nature. Like *mean men*, the word here used is sometimes put for *men of low degree*, they have dealt deceitfully like base men that have no sense of honour. (3.) Herein they trod in the steps of our first parents; they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; so it might very well be read; as he transgressed the covenant of innocence, so they transgressed the covenant of grace; so treacherously, so foolishly; *there* in paradise he violated his engagements to God, and *there* in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements. And by their treacherous dealing they like Adam have ruined themselves and theirs. Note, Sin is so much the worse, the more there is in it of the *similitude of Adam's transgression*, Rom. v. 14. (4.) Low thoughts of God and of his authority and favour was at the bottom of all this; for so some read it. *They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man*, as if it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them; as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the kindness conveyed by it no more valuable than that of a man. There is something sacred and binding in a man's covenant, as the apostle shews, Gal. iii. 15. but much more in the covenant of God, which yet they made small account of; and *there* in that covenant they dealt treacherously; promised fair but performed nothing. And dealing treacherously with God is here called dealing treacherously against him, for it is both an affront and an opposition. Deferters are traitors, and will be so treated; the *revolving heart* is a *rebellious heart*.

2. Some particular instances of their treachery are here given, *There* they dealt treacherously, i. e. in the places hereafter named.

1. Look on the other side Jordan to the country which lay most exposed to the insults of the neighbour nations, and where therefore the people were concerned to keep themselves under the divine protection, yet there you will find the most daring provocations of the Divine Majesty, ver. 8. Gilead, which lay in the lot of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, was a city of the workers of iniquity. Wickedness was the trade that was driven there; the country was called Gilead, but it was all called a city, because they were all as it were incorporated in one society of rebels against God. Or (as most think) Ramoth Gilead is the city here meant, one of the three cities of refuge on the other side Jordan, and a Levite's city: the inhabitants of it, though of the sacred tribe, were workers of iniquity, contrived it and practised it. Note, It is bad indeed when a Levite's city is a city of those that work iniquity; when those that are to preach good doctrine live ill lives. Particularly it is polluted with blood; as if that were a sin which the wicked Levites were in a special manner guilty of. In popish countries the clergy are observed to be the most bloody persecutors. Or, as it was a city of refuge by abusing the power it had to judge of murders, it became polluted with blood. They would for a bribe protect those that were guilty of wilful murder, whom they ought to have put to death; and would deliver those to the avenger of blood that were guilty but of chance-medley, if they were poor and had nothing to give them, and both these ways they were polluted with blood. Note, Blood defiles the land where it is shed, and no inquisition made, or no vengeance taken for it. And see how the best institutions, that are never so well designed to keep the balance even between justice and mercy, are capable of being abused and perverted to the manifest prejudice and violation of both.

2. Look among those whose business it was to minister in holy things, and they were as bad as the worst, and as vile as the vilest; ver. 9. the company of priests are so, not here and there one that is the scandal of his order, but the whole order and body of them; the priests go all one way by consent, with one shoulder, as the word is, one and all; and they make one another worse, more daring and fierce, and impudent in sin; more crafty and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti or gangs of highwaymen that cut men's throats to get their money. (1.) They were cruel, and blood-thirsty, they murder those that they have a pique against, or that stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them. (2.) They were cunning, they laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous malicious designs; thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ, to take him, saying, *Not on the feast-day*. (3.) They were concurring, as one man; they murder in the way, in the high-way, where travellers should be safe, there they murder by consent, aiding and abetting one another in it; see how unanimous wicked people are in doing mischief, and should not good people be so then in doing good? They murder in the way to Shechem, so the margin reads it as a proper name, such as were going to Jerusalem (for that way Shechem lay) to worship. Or in the way to Shechem, some think means in the same manner that their father Levi, with Simeon his brother, murdered the Shechemites, Gen. xxxiv. by fraud and deceit, and some understand it of their destroying the souls of men by drawing them to sin. (4.) They did it with contrivance; they commit lewdness; the word signifies such wickedness as is committed with deliberation, and of malice prepense, as we say. The more there is of device and design in sin the worse it is.

3. Look into the body of the people, take a view of the whole house of Israel, and they are all alike, ver. 10. I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel, and though it be never so artfully managed God discovers it, and will discover it to them; and who can deny that which God himself faith he hath seen? *There is the whoredom of Ephraim*, both corporal and spiritual whoredom, there it is too plain to be denied. Note, The sin of sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, has enough in it to make them tremble, for it is a horrible thing, it is amazing, and it is threatening; to make them blush, for Israel is thereby defiled and rendered odious in the sight of God.

4. Look into Judah, and you find them sharing with Israel, ver. 11. Also, O Judah, he hath set a harvest for thee; thou must be reckoned with as well as Ephraim. thou art ripe for destruction too, and the time, even the set time of thy destruction is hastening on, when thou hast ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness, shalt reap the same. The general judgment is compared to a harvest, Matt. xiii. 39. so are particular judgments, Joel iii. 13. Rev. xiv. 15. I have appointed a time to call thee to account, even when I returned the captivity of my people, i. e. when those captives of Judah which were taken by the men of Israel were restored, in obedience to the command of God sent them by Obed the prophet, 2 Chron. xxviii. 8—15. When God spared them that time, he set them a harvest, i. e. he designed to reckon with them another time for all together. Note, Preservations from present judgments, if a good use be not made of them, are but reservations for greater judgments.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A general charge drawn up against Israel for those high crimes and misdemeanors by which they had obstructed the course of God's favours to them, ver. 1, 2. (2.) A particular accusation. (1.) Of the court; the king, princes, and judges, ver. 3—7. (2.) Of the country. Ephraim is here charged with conforming to the nations, ver. 8. senselessness and stupidity under the judgments of God, ver. 9—11. ingratitude to God for his mercies, ver. 13. incorrigible-ness under his judgments, ver. 14. contempt of God, ver. 15. and hypocrisy in their pretences to return to him, ver. 16. They are also threatened with a severe chastisement, which shall humble them, ver. 12. and if that prevail not, then with an utter destruction, ver. 13. particularly their princes, ver. 16.

1. **W**HEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. 2. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. 3. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. 4. They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened. 5. In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners. 6. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whilst they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. 7. They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

Some take away the last words of the foregoing chapter and make them the beginning of this; *when I returned*, or *would have returned the captivity of my people*, when I was about to come towards them in ways of mercy, even *when I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim*, i. e. the country and common people was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, i. e. the court and the chief city.

Now in these verses we may observe,

(1.) A general idea given of the present state of Israel, ver. 1, 2. See how the case now stood with them.

1. God graciously designed to do well for them, *I would have healed Israel*; Israel was sick and wounded, their disease was dangerous and malignant, and likely to be fatal, Isa. i. 6. But God offered to be their physician, to undertake the cure, and there was balm in Gilead sufficient to recover the health of the daughter of my people; their case was bad, but it was not desperate, nay, it was hopeful when God would have healed Israel, i. e. (1.) He would have reformed them, would have parted between them and their sin, would have purged out the corruptions that were among them by his laws and prophets. (2.) He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining state seemed sometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery, but their own folly put them back again. Note, If sinful miserable souls be not healed and helped, but perish in their sin and misery, they cannot lay the blame on God, for he both could and would have healed them, he offered to take the ruin under his hand. And there are some special seasons when God manifests his readiness to heal a disordered church and nation; now and then a hopeful crisis, which if carefully watched and improved, might even when the case is very bad, turn the scale for life and health.

2. They stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; when God would have healed them, when they bid fair for reformation and peace, then their iniquity was discovered, and their wickedness, and that stop that current of God's favours, and undid all again. (1.) Then when their case came to be examined and enquired into in order to their cure, that wickedness which had been concealed and palliated was found out; not that it was ever hid from God, but he speaks after the manner of men; as a surgeon when he probes a wound in order to the cure of it, finds it touches the vitals and is incurable, goes no further in his endeavours to cure it; so when God came down to see the case of Israel (as the expression is, Gen. xviii. 21.) with kind intentions towards them, he found their wickedness so very flagrant, and them so hardened in it, so impudent and impenitent, that he could not in honour shew them the favour he designed them. Note, Sinners are not healed because they would not be healed; Christ would have gathered them, and they would not. (2.) Then when some endeavours were used to reform and reclaim them, that wickedness which had been restrained and kept under, broke out; and from God's step towards the healing of them they took occasion to be so much the more provoking. When endeavours were used to reform them, vice grew more impetuous, more outrageous, and swelled so much the higher, as a stream when it is dammed up; when they began to prosper they grew more proud, wanton and secure, and so stopped the progress of their cure. Note, It is sin that turns away good things from us, then when they are coming towards us; and it is the folly and ruin of multitudes, that when God would do well for them they do ill for themselves. And what was it that did them this mischief? In one word, they commit falsehood, they worship idols, so some; defraud one another, so others; or rather, they dissemble with God in their professions of repentance and regard to him. They say, they are desirous to be healed by him, and in order to that, willing to be ruled by him, but they lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue.

3. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience and government was at the bottom of all their wickedness, ver. 2. They consider not in their hearts, they never say it to their own hearts, never think of this that I remember all their wickedness. As if God either could not see it, though he is all eye, or did not heed it, though his name is jealous, or had forgot it though he is an eternal mind that can never be unmindful; or would not reckon for it, though he is the judge of heaven and earth. This is the sinners' atheism, as good say there is no God, as say he is either ignorant or forgetful, none that judgeth in the earth, as say, he remembers not the things he is to give judgment upon; it is a high affront they put upon God, it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves;

themselves; they say, *the Lord shall not see*, Psa. xciv. 7. They cannot but know that *God remembers all their works*, they have been told it many a time, nay, if you ask them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not consider it; they do not think of it when they should, and with application to themselves and their own works, else they would not, they durst not do as they do. But the time will come when those who thus deceive themselves shall be undeceived; *now their own doings have beset them about*, i. e. they are come at length to such a pitch of wickedness that their sins appear on every side of them; all their neighbours see how bad they are, and can they think that God doth not see it? Or rather, the punishment of their doings besets them about, they are surrounded and embarrassed with troubles, so that they cannot get out; by which it appears that the sins they smart for are before my face; not only that I have seen them, but that I am displeased at them, for till God by pardoning our sins hath cast them behind his back, they are still before his face. Note, Sooner or later God will convince those who do not now consider it, that he remembers all their works.

4. God had begun to contend with them by his judgments, in earnest of what was further coming; *the thief comes in, and the troop of robbers spoils without*. Some take this as an instance of their wickedness that they robbed and spoiled one another; *Nec hospes ab hospite tutus*. It seems rather to be a punishment of their sin; they were infested with secret thieves among themselves, that robbed their houses and shops, and picked their pockets, and troops of robbers, foreign invaders, that with open violence spoil abroad; so far was Israel from being healed, that they had fresh wounds given them daily by robbers and spoilers. And all this the effect of sin, all to punish them for robbing God, Isa. xliii. 24. Mal. iii. 8—11.

(2.) A particular account of the sins of the court, the kings and princes, and those about them, and the tokens of God's displeasure they were under for them.

1. Their king and princes were pleased with the wickedness and profaneness of their subjects, who were emboldened thereby to be so much the more wicked, *ver. 3. They make the king and princes glad with their wickedness*. It pleased them to see the people conform to their wicked laws and examples, in the worship of their idols, and other instances of impiety and immorality; and to hear them flatter and applaud them in their wicked ways; when Herod saw that his wickedness pleased the people he proceeded further in it; much more will the people do so when they see it pleases the prince, *Act. xii. 3*. Particularly they made them glad with their lies, with the lying praises with which they crowned the favourites of the prince, and the lying calumnies and censures with which they blackened those whom they knew the princes had a dislike of; those that shew themselves pleased with slanders and ill-natured stories, shall never want those about them that will fill their ears with such stories; *Prov. xxix. 12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, and will make him glad with their lies.

2. Drunkenness and revelling abounded much at the court, *ver. 5. The day of our king was a merry day with them*, either his birth-day or his inauguration day, of which it is probable they had an anniversary observation; or perhaps it was some holiday of his appointing, which was therefore called his day; on that day the princes met to drink the king's health, and got him among them, to be merry, and made him sick with bottles of wine. It should seem that the king did not ordinarily drink to excess, but he was now upon a high day brought to it by the artifices of the princes, tempted by the goodness of the wine, the gaiety of the company, or the healths they urged; and so little was he used to it that it made him sick; and it is justly charged as a crime, as *crimen læsæ majestatis*, upon those who thus imposed upon him, and made him sick; nor would it serve for an excuse that it was the day of their king, but was rather an aggravation of the crime, that when they pretended to do him honour, they dishonoured him to the highest degree. If it be a great affront and injury to a common person to make him drunk, and there is a woe to those that do it, *Hab. ii. 15*. much more to a crowned head; for the greater any man's dignity is, the greater disgrace it is to him to be drunk. *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine*, *Prov. xxxi. 4, 5*. See what a prejudice the sin of drunkenness is to a man, to a king, (1.) In his health, it made him sick; it is a force upon nature; and strange it is by what charms men, otherwise rational enough, can be drawn to that, which besides the offence it gives to God, and the damage it doth to their spiritual and eternal welfare is a present disorder and distemper to their own bodies. (2.) In his honour; for when he was thus intoxicated he stretched out his hand with scorn; then he that was entrusted with the government of a kingdom lost the government of himself; and so far forgot, (1.) The dignity of a king, that he made himself familiar with players and buffoons, and those whose company was a scandal. (2.) The duty of a king that he joined in confederacy with atheists, and the profane scoffers at religion, whom he ought to have silenced and put to shame; he sat in the seat of the scornful, of those that are arrived at the highest pitch of impiety; he struck in with them, said as they said, did as they did, and exerted his power, and stretched forth the hand of his government in concurrence with them. Goodness and good men are often made the song of the drunkards, *Psal. lxi. 12—xxxv. 16*. but woe unto thee, O Land, when thy king is such a child as to stretch forth his hand with those that make them so, *Eccles. x. 16*.

3. Adultery and uncleanness prevailed much among the courtiers. This is spoken of *ver. 4—6, 7*, and that of drunkenness comes in in the midst of this article; for wine is oil to the fire of lust, *Prov. xxiii. 33*. Those that are inflamed with fleshly lusts, that are adulterers, *ver. 4*. are here again and again compared to an oven heated by the baker, *ver. 4. they have made ready their heart like an oven*, *ver. 6. they are all hot as an oven*, *ver. 7*. Note, 1. An unclean heart is like an oven heated; and the unclean lusts and affections of it are as the fuel that makes it hot. It is an inward fire, it keeps the heat within itself, so adulterers and fornicators secretly burn in lust, as the expression is, *Rom. i. 27*. The heat of the oven is an intense heat, especially as is here described; he that heats it stirs up the fire, and ceaseth not from raising it up, till the bread is ready to be put in, being kneaded and leavened. All which only signifies that they are like an oven when it is at the hottest. Nay, when it is too hot for the baker, (so the learned Dr. Pocock) when it is hotter than he would have it, so that the raiser up of the fire ceaseth so long as while the dough that is kneaded is in the fermenting, that the heat may abate a little. Thus fiery hot are the lusts of an unclean heart. 2. The unclean wait for an opportunity to compass their wicked desires; having made ready their heart like an oven they lie in wait, to catch their prey; *The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight*, *Job xxiv. 15*. Their baker sleeps all the night, but in the morning it burneth to a flaming fire, i. e. As the baker having kindled a fire in his oven, and laid sufficient fuel to it, goes to bed and sleeps all night, and in the morning finds his oven well heated and ready for his purpose; so these wicked people, when they have laid some wicked plot, and formed a design for the gratifying of some covetous, ambitious, revengeful, or unclean lusts, have their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that though they may stifle them for a while, yet the fire of corrupt affections is still glowing within, and as soon as ever there is an opportunity for it, their purposes which they have compassed and imagined, break out into overt acts, as a fire flames

out when it has vent given it. Thus they are all hot as an oven. Note, Lust in the heart is like fire in an oven, puts it into a heat; but the day is coming when those who thus make themselves like a fiery oven with their own vile affections, if that fire be not extinguished by divine grace, shall be made as a fiery oven by divine wrath, *Psal. xxi. 9*. when the day comes that shall burn as an oven, *Mal. iv. 1*.

4. They resist the proper methods of reformation and redress; they have devoured their judges, those few good judges that were among them, that would have put out these fires, with which they were heated, they fell foul upon them, and would not suffer them to do justice, but were ready to stone them, and perhaps did so; or as some think they provoked God to deprive them of the blessings of magistracy, and to leave all in confusion; all their kings are fallen one after another, and their families with them; which could not but put the kingdom into confusion, crumble it into contending parties, and occasion a great deal of bloodshed; there are heart-burnings among them, they are hot as an oven with rage and malice at one another, and this occasions the devouring of their judges, the falling of their kings; for the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof, *Prov. xxviii. 2*. But in the midst of all this trouble and disorder there is none among them that calls unto God, that sees his hand stretched out against them in these judgments, and deprecates the strokes of it; none, or next to none, that stir up themselves to take hold on God, *Isa. lxiv. 7*. Note, Those are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, that continue to live without prayer, even when they are in trouble and distress.

8. Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. 9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. 10. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this. 11. ¶ Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. 12. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as the congregation hath heard. 13. Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. 14. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. 15. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. 16. They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Having seen how vicious and corrupt the court was, we now come to inquire how it is with the country, and we find that to be no better, and no marvel if the distemper that hath so seized the head affect the whole body, so that there is no soundness in it; the iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, as well as the sin of Samaria, of the people as well as the princes, of which here are divers instances.

1. They were not peculiar and intire for God, as they should have been, *ver. 8*. (1.) They did not distinguish themselves from the heathen, as God had distinguished them; Ephraim, he hath mingled himself among the people; hath associated with them, and conformed himself to them, and has in a manner confounded himself with them, and lost his character among them. God had said, *The people shall dwell alone*, but they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works, *Psal. cvi. 35*. They went up and down among the heathen to beg help of one of them against another; so some; whereas if they had kept close to God they had not needed the help of any of them. (2.) They were not intirely devoted to God; Ephraim is a cake not turned, and so is burnt on one side, and dough on the other side, but good for nothing on either side. As in Ahab's time, so now they haluted between God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. Note, It is sad to think how many who after a fort profess religion are made up of contraries and inconsistencies, as a cake not turned; a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extreme or the other.

2. They were strangely insensible of the judgments of God which they were under, and which threatened their ruin; *ver. 9*. Observe, (1.) The condition they were in; God was now to them in his judgments as a moth and as rottenness, they were silently and slowly drawing towards the ruin of their state; partly by the encroachments of foreigners upon them, strangers have devoured his strength, and eaten them up; they have wasted his wealth and treasure, lessened his numbers, and consumed the fruits of the earth; some devoured them by open wars, as *2 Kings xiii. 7*. when the king of Syria made them like the dust by threshing, others by pretending treaties of peace and amity, in which they extorted abundance of wealth from them, and made them pay dear for that which did them no good, but which afterwards they paid dearer for, as *2 Kings xvi. 9*. This Ephraim got by mingling himself with the heathen, and suffering them to mingle with him, they devoured that which he staid upon, and supported himself with. Note, Those that make not God their strength, (*Psal. lli. 7*.) make that their strength which will soon be devoured by strangers. They were thus reduced partly by their own mal-administrations among themselves; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, (are sprinkled upon him, so the word is) i. e. the sad symptoms of a decaying declining state, that is waxing old, and ready to vanish away; and effects of trouble and vexation. *Cura facit canas*. The almond-tree doth not as yet flourish, but it begins to turn colour, which speaks aloud to him that the evil days are coming, and the years of which he shall say, he has no pleasure in them, *Eccles. xii. 1—5*. (2.) Their regardlessness of these warnings. He knows it not; he is not aware of the hand of God gone out against him, it is lifted up, but he will not see, *Isa. xxvi. 11*. He doth not know how near his ruin is, and takes no care to prevent it. Note, Stupidity under lesser judgments is a preface of greater coming.

3. They went on frowardly in their wicked ways, and were not reclaimed by the rebukes they were under, *ver. 10*. The pride of Israel still testifies to his face as it had done before, *chap. v. 5*. under humbling providences their hearts were still unhumiliated, their lusts unmortified; and it is through

through the pride of their countenance that they will not seek after God; Psal. x. 4. they do not return to the Lord their God by repentance and reformation, nor do they seek him by faith and prayer for all this; though they suffer for going astray from him, though it can never be well with them till they come back to him, and though they have in vain sought to others for relief, yet they think not of applying to God.

4. They were infatuated in their counsels, and took very wrong methods when they were in distress, *ver. 11, 12. Ephraim is like a silly dove without an heart.* To be harmless as a dove without gall, and not to hurt or injure others is commendable, but to be sottish as a dove without heart, that knows not how to defend herself and provide for her own safety is a shame. The *folly* of this dove is, (1.) That she laments not the loss of her young that are taken from her; but will make her nest again in the same place; so they have their people carried away by the enemy and are not affected with it, but continue their dealings with those that deal barbarously with them: (2.) That she is easily enticed by the bait into the net, and has no heart, no understanding to discern her danger, as many other fowls do. *Prov. i. 17. the basket is to the snare, and knows not that it is for her life.* *Prov. vii. 23.* so they were drawn into leagues with neighbour nations that were their ruin. (3.) That when she is frightened she has not courage to stay in the dove-house where she is safe, and under the careful protection of her owner, but flutters and hovers; seeking shelter first in one place, then in another, and thereby exposes herself so much the more: so this people, when they were in distress, sought not to God, did not fly like the doves to their windows, where they might have been secured from all the birds of prey that struck at them, but threw themselves out of God's protection, and then called to Egypt to help them, and went in all haste to Assyria, to seek for that aid in vain, which they might, by repentance and prayer, have found nearer home in their God. Note, It is a silly senseless thing for those that have a God in heaven to go to trust to creatures for that refuge and relief, that is to be had in him only; and they that do so are a people of no understanding, they are without heart.

Now see what comes of this *silly dove*, *ver. 12. When they shall go to Egypt and Assyria, I will spread my net upon them.* Note, Those that will not abide by the mercy of God must expect to be pursued by the justice of God. Here, (1.) They are ensnared; *I will spread my net upon them*, bring them into straits that they may see their folly, and think of returning. Note, It is common for those that go away from God to find snares there where they expected shelters. (2.) They are humbled; they soar upwards; proud of their foreign alliances, and confiding in them, but *I will bring them down*, let them fly never so high, as the fowls of the heaven, that are shot flying. Note, God can and will bring those down that exalt themselves as the eagle, *Obad. 3, 4.* (3.) They are made to smart for their folly; *I will chastise them.* Note, The disappointments we meet with in the creature when we put a confidence in it are a necessary chastisement or discipline, that we may learn to be wiser another time. (4.) In all this the scripture is fulfilled; it is as their congregation has heard; they have been many a time told by the word of God read and preached, and sung in their religious assemblies, that *vain is the help of man*, that *in the son of man there is no help*; they have heard both from the law and from the prophets what judgments God would bring upon them for their wickedness, and as they have heard, now they shall see, they shall feel. Note, It concerns us to take notice of the word of God, which we hear from time to time in the congregation, and to be governed by it, for we must shortly be judged by it; and it will justify God in the condemnation of sinners, and aggravate it to them, that they have had plain public warning given them of it, it is what their congregation has heard many a time, but they would not take warning. *Son, remember thou wast told what would come of it, and now thou seest they were not vain words, Zech. i. 6.*

5. They revolted from God, and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the various methods he took to retain them in their allegiance, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* Where observe.

1. How kindly and tenderly God had dealt with them, as a gracious sovereign towards a people dear unto him, and whose prosperity he had much at heart. He had redeemed them, *ver. 13.* brought them at first out of the land of Egypt, and since delivered them out of many a distress. He had bound and strengthened their arms, *ver. 15.* when their power was weakened, like an arm broke or out of joint, God set it again, and bound it, as the surgeon doth a broken bone to make it knit. God had given Israel victories over the Syrians, *2 Kings xiii. 16, 17.* had restored their coat, *2 Kings xiv. 25, 26.* had girded them with strength for battle. Though I have chastened them, so the margin reads it, sometimes corrected them for their faults, and thereby taught them, at other times strengthened their arms and relieved them, though I have used both fair means and foul to work upon them, it was all to no purpose, they were mercy-proof and judgment-proof.

2. How impudent their carriage had been towards him notwithstanding; which is described here for the conviction and humiliation of all those that have gone on in any way of wickedness, that they may see how exceeding sinful their sin is, how heinous, how the God of heaven interprets it, how he resents it. (1.) He had courted them to him, and taken them into covenant with himself, but they fled from him, as if he had been their dangerous enemy who had always approved himself their faithful friend; they wandered from him as the silly dove from her nest, for those who forsake God will find no rest or settlement in the creature, but wander endlessly. They fled from God when they forsook the worship of him, and run away from his service, and withdrew themselves from their allegiance to him. (2.) He had given them his laws, which were all holy, just, and good, by which he designed to keep them in the right way, but they transgressed against him, they sinned with a high hand and a stiff neck, wilfully and presumptuously, so the word signifies; they broke through the fence of the divine law, and therein thwarted the design of the divine love. (3.) He had made known his truths to them, and given them all possible proofs of the sincerity of his good-will to them, and yet they spoke lies against him, and set up false gods in competition with him, they denied his providence and power, thus they belied the Lord, *Jer. v. 12.* they rejected his messages sent them by his prophets, and said, They should have peace though they went on in sin, directly against what he said. In their hypocritical professions of religion, shews of devotion and promises of amendment, they lied to the Lord, which he took as lying against him. (4.) He was their rightful lord and king, and had always ruled in Jacob with equity, and for the public good, and yet they rebelled against him, *ver. 14.* They not only went off from him, but took up arms against him, would have deposed him if they could, and set up another. (5.) He designed well for them, but they imagined mischief against him, *ver. 15.* Sin is a mischievous thing, it is mischief against God, for it is treason against his crown and dignity; not that the sinners can do any thing to hurt their Creator (as one of the ancients observes on these words) but what they can they do; and it is so much the worse when it is not done by surprise or through inadvertency, but designedly and with contrivance; the Jews have a saying, which Dr. Pocock quotes here, *The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression.* The designing of mischief is doing it in God's account; compassing and

imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. They that imagine an ill thing, though it prove a vain thing, *Psal. ii. 1.* will be reckoned with for the imagination.

3. How they shall be punished for this, *ver. 13. Wo unto them, for they have fled from me.* Note, Those who fly from God have woes sent after them, and are without doubt in a woful case. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them, the word of God saith *wo to them*; and observe what follows immediately, *destruction unto them.* Note, The woes of God's word have real effects; *destruction* makes them good; the judgments of his hand shall verify the judgments of his mouth; those whom he curseth and pronounceth woful, they are cursed, they are woful indeed.

6. Their shews of devotion and reformation were but shews, and in them they did but mock God.

1. They pretended devotion, but it was not sincere, *ver. 14.* When the hand of God was gone forth against them, they made some sort of application to him, *When he slew them, then they sought him; Lord, in trouble have they visited thee;* but it was all in hypocrisy. (1.) When they were under personal troubles, and called upon God in secret, they were not sincere in that; *they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.* When they were chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pains, perhaps ill of the wounds they received in war, they cried, and groaned, and complained in the forms of devotion, and it may be they used many good words, proper enough for the circumstances they were in, they cried, *G.d. help us, and, Lord, look upon us;* but they did not cry with their heart, and therefore God reckons it was no crying to him. Moses is said to cry unto God when he spoke not a word, only his heart prayed, with faith and fervency, *Exod. xiv. 15.* These here made a great noise, and said a deal, and yet did not cry to God, because their hearts were not right with him, not subjected to his will, devoted to his honour, or employed in his service. To pray is to lift up the soul to God, this is the essence of prayer; if that be not, words, though never so well worded, are but wind; but if there be that, it is an acceptable prayer, though the groanings cannot be uttered. Note, Those do not pray to God at all that do not pray in the spirit. Nay, God is so far from approving it; and accepting of it, that he calls it howling; some think it intimates the noisiness of their prayers, they cried to God, as they used to cry to Baal, when they thought he must be awaked; or the brutish violent passions which they vented in their prayers, they snarled at the stone, and howled under the whip, but regarded not the hand; or it notes that their hypocritical prayers were so far from pleasing God that they were offensive to him; he was angry at their prayers; the songs of the temple shall be howlings, *Amos viii. 3.* God will be so far from pitying them that he will justly laugh at their calamity; who have so often laughed at his authority. (2.) When they were under public troubles, and met together to implore God's favour, in that also they were hypocritical, they assembled themselves, for fashion-sake, because it was usual to call a solemn assembly in times of general mourning, *Zeph. ii. 1.* But it was only to pray for corn and wine that they came together, which was the thing they wanted, and feared being deprived of by the want of rain, the judgment they now laboured under; they did not pray for the favour and grace of God, that God would give them repentance, pardon their sins, and turn away his wrath, but only that he would not take away from them their corn and wine. Note, Carnal hearts in their prayers to God covet temporal mercies only, and dread and deprecate no other but temporal judgments, for they have no sense of any other.

2. They pretended reformation, but neither was that sincere, *ver. 16.* Here is, (1.) The sin of Israel. They return, i. e. they make shew as if they would return, they take on them to repent and amend their doings, but they make nothing of it; they do not come home to God, nor return to their allegiance; whereas God saith, *Jer. iv. 1. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me;* do not only turn towards me, but return to me. This dissimulation of theirs makes them like a deceitful bow, which looks as if it were fit for business, and is bent and drawn accordingly; but when strength comes to be laid to it, either the bow or string breaks, and the arrow, instead of flying to the mark, drops at the archer's foot. Such were their essays towards repentance and reformation. (2.) The sin of the princes of Israel; that which is charged upon them is the rage of the tongue, quarrelling with God and his providence, and with all about them when they are crossed. Princes think they may say what they will, and that it is their prerogative to huff and bluster, to curse, and rail, and call names at their pleasure, but let them know there is a God above them that will call them to an account for the rage of their tongues, and make their own tongues to fall upon them. (3.) The punishment of Israel and their princes for their sin. As for the princes, they shall fall by the sword, either of their enemies, or of their own people, some by one, and some by the other; and this shall be their derision, this is that for which they shall be derided in the land of Egypt, when they flee to the Egyptians for succour, *ver. 11.* Their sin and punishment shall make them a laughing-stock to all about them. Note, Those that are treacherous and deceitful in their dealings with God, and passionate and outrageous in their carriage towards men, will justly be made a derision to their neighbours, for they make themselves ridiculous.

C H A P. VIII.

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of Israel, every verse almost speaks both; and all to bring them to repentance; when they saw the malignant nature of their sin in the description of that, they could not but be convinced how much it was their duty to repent of what was so ill in itself; and when they saw the mischievous consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent for the preventing of them. (1.) The sin of Israel is here set forth, (1.) In many general expressions, *ver. 1—3—12—14.* (2.) In many particular instances, setting up kings without God, *ver. 4.* and setting up idols against God, *ver. 4, 5, 6—11.* and courting alliances with the neighbour nations, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* (3.) In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion, and relation to God, *ver. 2—13, 14.* (4.) The punishment of Israel is here set forth, in answering the sin. God would bring an enemy upon them, *ver. 2—13.* All their projects should be blasted, *ver. 7.* Their confidence in their idols and in their foreign alliances should disappoint them, *ver. 6—8—10.* Their strength at home should fail them, *ver. 14.* their secrets should have no reckoning made of them, and their sins should have a reckoning made for them, *ver. 13.*

1. SET the trumpet to thy mouth: he shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. 2. Israel shall cry unto me, My

My God, we know thee. 3. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. 4. They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. 5. ¶ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off: mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? 6. For from Israel was it also, the workmen made, therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. 7. For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the stranger shall swallow it up.

The reproofs and threatenings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to *set the trumpet to his mouth*, ver. 1. thus to call a *solemn assembly*, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver, and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm, must, in God's name, proclaim war with this rebellious nation; an enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, *Ezek. xxxiii. 3.* The prophet must *lift up his voice like a trumpet*, *Isa. lviii. 1.* and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, *Jer. vi. 17.*

Now, 1. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors against their sovereign Lord. (1.) They have *transgressed my covenant*, ver. 1. They have not only transgressed the command, every sin doth that, but they have *transgressed the covenant*, they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract, they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage-covenant by their spiritual whoredom; have, in effect, declared they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God, that is *transgressing the covenant*; they have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully. (2.) They have *trespassed against my law*; in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk, and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasses upon the bounds set us by that law. (3.) They have *cast off the thing that is good*. They have *put away and rejected good*, i. e. God himself, so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good and doth good, and is our goodness; *there is none good but one, that is God*; the fountain of all good. They have cast him off, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him; God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any till they first cast him off. Or, as we read it, they have cast off the thing that is good, they have cast off the service and worship of God which is in effect *casting God off*. They have cast off that which denominates men good, they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue and honesty. Observe, *They have transgressed my covenant*, it is come to that at last, for they *trespassed against my law*, breaking the command, and made way for breaking the covenant; and they did that for they *cast off that which was good*; there it began first. They left off to be wise and to do good and then they went all to nought, *Psal. xxxvi. 3.* See the method of apostacy, men first cast off that which is good. Then those omissions make way for commissions; and frequent actual transgressions of God's law, bring men at length to an habitual renouncing of his covenant. When men cast off praying, and hearing, and sabbath sanctification, and other things that are good, they are in the high road to a total forsaking of God.

2. Here are general threatenings of wrath and ruin for their sin; *the enemy shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord*, and ver. 3. *shall pursue him*. If by the house of the Lord we understand the temple at Jerusalem, by the eagle that comes against it, we must suppose to be meant either Sennacherib, who had taken all the fenced cities of Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem, and, no doubt, aimed at the house of the Lord, to lay that waste as he had done the temples of the gods of other nations; or Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the temple, and made a prey of the vessels of the temple; but if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people, which as Israelites to whom pertained the adoption, the glory and the covenant, is here called the house of the Lord. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is bid to tell them, that now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it, they were but as a carcase to which the eagles and other birds of prey should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously. Note, Those that break their covenant of friendship with God, expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they make themselves a cheap and easy prey; and their having been the house of the Lord, and his living temples; will be no excuse or refuge to them. See *Amos iii. 2.*

3. Here is the people's hypocritical claim of relation to God when they were in trouble and distress. Ver. 2. *Israel shall cry unto me*, i. e. when either they are threatened with these judgments, and would plead an exemption; or when the judgments are inflicted on them, and they apply themselves to God for relief, *pouring out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them*, they will plead that among them, *God is known and his name is great*, *Psal. lxxvi. 1.* and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways, which in their prosperity they desired not but despised. They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and (as impudent beggars) will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him long. Note, There are many who in works deny God, and disown him, yet to serve a turn will profess that they know him, they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stand will it stand a man in to be able to say, *My God, I know thee*, when he cannot say, *my God, I love thee*, and *my God, I serve thee*, and cleave to thee only.

4. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them in God's name. Ver. 5. *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* It is not meant of absolute innocency, that is what the guilty can never attain to, but how long will it be ere they repent and reform; ere they become innocent in this matter and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded in their idols, how long will it be ere they are weaned from them? ere they are able to get clear of them? So it might be rendered. This intimates that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness either of flesh or spirit which has been long wallowed in. But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities, and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy, that is it that keeps his anger against them burning, which would soon be turned away if they did but attain to innocency, from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, *how long* will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy, but they do not hear him ask *how long* will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty?

5. Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of; and for which God's anger is kindled against them.

1. In their civil affairs, they set up kings without God, and in contempt of him, ver. 4. So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their king, and chose Saul, that they might be like the nations; so they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up Jeroboam, wherein though they fulfilled God's secret counsel, yet they neither aimed at his glory, nor consulted his oracle, nor applied themselves to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by their own humour, and hurried on by the impetus of their own passions; so they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied; when it seems to have grown fashionable to set up kings and depose them again, according as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, *2 Kings xv. 8, &c.* Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs when we go about them, and go on in them without consulting God, and acknowledge not him in all our ways. They set up kings, and I know it not, i. e. I did not know it from them, they did not ask counsel at my mouth, whether they might lawfully do it, or whether it would be best for them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised. They look not to the holy One of Israel, *Isa. xxxi. 1.* nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who before he took upon him the government, uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, *Judg. xi. 11.* Note, Those that are entrusted with public concerns, and particularly with the election and nomination of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction, and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse, for they set up calves against God, in competition with him, and contradiction to him. Of their silver and their gold which God gave them and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with it, they have made them idols; they called them gods, *1 Kings xii. 28, Behold thy gods, O Israel*; but God calls them idols; the word signifies griefs or troubles, because they are offensive to God, and will be ruining to those that worship them. Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols. So the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols. But they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous; their silver and their gold are the gods they place their happiness in, set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence.

Now to shew them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them,

1. Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and they will be found the creatures of their own fancies, and the work of their own hands, ver. 6. The calf they worshipped is here called the calf of Samaria, because it is probable when Samaria in Ahab's time became the metropolis of the kingdom, a calf was set up there to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods will still be for newer. Now let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to. (1.) To their own invention and institution; from Israel was it also. Not from the God of Israel, he expressly forbid it, but from Israel, it was a device of their own, some think not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians; for though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a golden calf, that was from Israel; it was their own iniquity. Now could that be worthy of their worship which was a contrivance of their own? It was from Israel, i. e. the gold and silver of which it was made was collected from the people of Israel by a bribe; it was a poor god that was framed by contribution. (2.) It was owing to skill and labour of the craftsman, *Deut. xxvii. 15.* The workmen made it, therefore it is not God. This is a very cogent conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain, that one would think their own thoughts should have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their idolatry. What can be more absurd than for men to worship that as a god giving being and good to them, which they themselves give being to, (both matter and form) but could not give life to? A made god is no God: This is a self-evident truth; and yet St. Paul was accused as criminal for preaching that they be no gods which are made with hands, *Acts xix. 26.* And this here which should have turned them from their idols comes in as a reason why they were inseparably wedded to them; therefore they could not attain to innocency, i. e. because it was from themselves; they were willing to have gods of their own, to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do what they pleased.

2. What their gods would come to. If they are not gods they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods they will be reckoned with, *The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces*, and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this, that it is not God, but an unprofitable idol, as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be broken to shivers, like a potter's vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be chips or saw-dust, it shall be a spider's web. So St. Jerom. It seems to allude to Moses's grinding the golden calf to powder that was in his time. This shall be served as that was; Sennacherib boasted what he had done to Samaria and her idols; *Isa. x. 11.* Note, Deifying any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels and ornaments for themselves of their silver and gold, they might have remained; but if they make gods of them they shall be broken to pieces.

3. What their gods would bring them to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all, *They have made themselves idols that they may be cut off*, ver. 4. that their gold and silver which they so abused may be cut off, so some take it, nay, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation, as if they had purposely designed it. And when this proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods where-in they trusted? None at all; *Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off*; i. e. it cannot give thee any help in thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee. Those that were justly sent to the gods whom they had chosen found them miserable comforters, *Judg. x. 14.* If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose all the delights and profits of it. If Samaria had continued firm and faithful to the god of Israel, he would have been a present powerful help to her, but the calf she preferred before him was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make their silver and their gold their god. It will cast them off, and not profit them in the day of wrath, *Ezek. vii. 19.* Note, Those that suffer themselves to be deceived into any idolatries, will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wolsey owned, that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince, he would not have cast him off, as his prince did in his old age.

Their disappointment in their idols, is illustrated, ver. 7. by a similitude which speaks both that and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry. (1.) They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols. *They have sown the wind*. They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expence to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman doth of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage by it, and that they should be

as prosperous and victorious as the neighbour nations were that that worshipped idols. But it is all a cheat; it is like *forcing the wind*, which can yield no increase: they labour in vain, labour for the wind, Eccl. v. 16. They take great pains to no purpose, and weary themselves for very vanity. Hab. ii. 13. They that make an idol of this world, do so, they set their eyes on that which is not, which like the wind makes a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it. (2.) They brought ruin upon themselves by it; they shall reap the whirlwind, a great whirlwind, to the word signifies, which shall hurry them away and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods for them, but they set the true God against them; their favour will stand them in no more stead than the wind, but his wrath will do them more mischief than a whirlwind. As a man sows so shall he reap: 'If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it for a while there penned up, what could he expect but that it should be enforced by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength, to break forth again in greater quantities with greater violence.' So Dr. Poole. They promise themselves plenty, peace and victory by worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing; what they sow never comes up; it has no stalk, no blade, or if it have, the bull shall yield no meal, it shall be as the thin ears, in Pharaoh's dream that were blasted with the east wind, and there was nothing in them: or if it yield, if they do prosper a while in their idolatrous courses, the strangers shall swallow it up, it shall be so far from doing them any service, that it shall be but as a bait to invite strangers to invade them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers and enable them to do so much the more mischief. Note, The service of idols is an unprofitable service, and the works of darkness unfruitful: nay, in the end they will be pernicious: Rom. vi. 21. the end of these things is death. They that for iniquity, reap vanity; nay, they that join to the devil reap corruption; the hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

8. Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. 9. For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers. 10. Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes. 11. Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. 12. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing. 13. They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt. 14. For Israel hath forgotten his maker, and buildeth temples: and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel that they had but one God to trust to, and he all-sufficient in every strait; and but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions, but it was their sin, and folly and shame, and they knew not when they were well; that they forsook their own mercies for lying vanities; for,

1. They multiplied their alliances; ver. 9. they have hired loves, or, as the margin reads it, they have hired lovers; they were at great expence to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value or affection at all for them; nor cared for having any thing to do with them, but only upon the Shechemites principles, shall not their cattle, and their substance be ours; Gen. xxxiv. 23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the nations about would have continued to admire them as a wise and understanding people, but when they profaned their own crown, their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them further than they paid dear for it. But those men have carried themselves ill among their neighbours, who have no loves no lovers but what they hire. See here,

1. The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations, ver. 8. Israel is swallowed up, devoured by strangers, their land eaten up, ver. 7. and themselves too; and being impoverished they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that is become a bankrupt, so that they are among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, a vessel of dishonour, 2 Tim. ii. 20. a despised broken vessel, Jer. xxii. 28. None of their neighbours have any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them. Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible; if the just have lost its favour, it is fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men. Or it notes their dispersion and captivity among the Gentiles; they shall be among them poor and prisoners, and who has pleasure in such?

2. The court that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding, ver. 9. They are gone to Assyria, to engage the king of Assyria to help them, and herein they are as a wild ass alone by himself, foolish and headstrong, and unruly, they will have their way, and nothing shall hold them in, no, not the bridle of God's laws, nothing shall turn them back, no, not the sword of God's wrath: They take a course by themselves, and the effect will be that like a wild ass by himself they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion. See Job xi. 12. Jer. ii. 24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild asses colt than in seeking for that succour and satisfaction in the creature that is to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbour nations, ver. 10. Though they have hired among the nations, and hoped thereby to prevent their own ruin, yet now will I gather them, as the sheaves in the floor, Mic. iv. 8. So that what they provided for their own safety, shall but make them the more easier prey to their enemies. Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission: nay, that which men hire for their own preservation, often contributes to their own destruction. See Isa. vii. 20. The king of Assyria, whose friendship they courted, called himself a king of princes, Ha. i. 8. Are not my princes altogether kings, he laid burdens upon Israel, levied taxes upon them, 2 Kings xv. 19—20. And for these they shall sorrow a little, i. e. this shall be but a little burden to them in comparison of what they may further expect; or they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will not lay it to heart, and therefore may expect heavier judgments. They have begun to be diminished (so some read it) by the burden of the king of princes, but this is only the beginning of sorrows, Matt. xxiv. 8. the beginning of revenges, Deut. xxxii. 42. Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people; that he may shew how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but they that are made to sorrow as

little if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort will another day be made to sorrow a great deal, to sorrow everlastingly.

2. They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe,

1. How they denied the power of godliness; and wholly cast them off, ver. 12. I have written to him the great things of my law; that speaks the privilege they enjoyed, as having God's statutes and judgments made known to them; and being instructed with the lively oracles. Note, 1. The things of God's law are great things, they are *magna Dei*. They are things that speak the greatness of the law-maker, and things of great use and great importance to us, they are our life, and our eternal welfare depends upon our observance of them, and obedience to them: they will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable. 2. It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law written; thus they are reduced to a greater certainty, spread the further, and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted than if they were transmitted by word of mouth only. 2. The things of God's law are of his own writing, for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 3. It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church that these great things are written to them, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them; what things were written in former ages were written for our learning; and are profitable for us. And if they were happy that had the great things of God's law written to them, how much happier are we that have the much greater things of his gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted, these great things of the law were counted as a strange thing; as unintelligible and unreasonable, which might therefore be slighted because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for; or as foreign, and things of no concernment to them; things that they had nothing to do with, nor were to be governed by; they used those things as strangers, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Note, 1. God having written us these things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us, as our nearest relations, Prov. vii. 3, 4. for therefore we have them written that they may talk with us, Prov. vi. 22. 2. We make nothing of the things of God's law, if we make strange of them, as if they did not concern us, and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they kept up the form of godliness, notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

1. They multiplied their altars. ver. 11. Ephraim made many altars to sin. God appointed that there should be but one altar for sacrifices; Deut. xii. 3—5. but the ten tribes having forsaken that, yet would not be thought very devout, and zealous for the honour of God, and as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made many altars, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they intended, or at least pretended, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's express command, nor would the example of the patriarchs, who before the law of Moses had many altars. No, they made many altars to sin, i. e. they did that which turned into sin to them; and therefore these altars shall be unto him to sin; i. e. God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes, which they designed to be for the expiation of their crimes! Or they shall be to him an occasion of further sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel, would introduce altars dedicated to other gods. Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as sin upon them that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be. And the way of this, as other sins, is down-hill, those that once deviate from the fixed rule of God's commands will wander endlessly.

2. They multiplied their sacrifices, ver. 13. Their altars were smoking altars, and they sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices; they were at a great expence upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are who set up their own inventions in the room of divine institutions) were very zealous in their way; as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great atonement; and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own, to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how doth it speed? (1.) God makes no reckoning of their services. The Lord accepted them not; how should he? when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone sanctified the gift? And when they only sacrificed flesh, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent believing heart. Note, Those services only are acceptable to God which are performed according to the rule of his word, and through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. (2.) He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins; now will he instead of pardoning their iniquity and blotting out their iniquities as they expected, remember their iniquity and visit their sins, such an abomination to the Lord are the sacrifices of the wicked, that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations; when they think by their sacrifices to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a connivance at their wickedness, he will resent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-billing sin. Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an imprecation of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered, according to the multitude of the idols. I will punish their sins, for they shall return to Egypt, i. e. they shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers. Or it refers to Deut. xviii. 63. where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

3. They multiplied their temples; and these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem to put his name there. Israel has forgotten his Maker, ver. 11. They pretended to know him, and yet forgot him, for they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, when the remembrance of him would give check to their lusts: it was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God that he was their Maker. Deut. xxxii. 15—18. Job xxxv. 10. as nothing is more obliging to us to remember him than that he is our Creator, Eccles. xii. 1. He has forgotten his maker and builds temples; he seems by the temples he builds to be mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has forgotten him, because he has cast off the fear of him. Some by temples here understand palaces, for to the word sometimes signifies. He has forgotten his Maker, and yet is so secure and haughty, that he set his judgments at defiance, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? Judah is likewise charged with multiplying fenced cities, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence, Isa. xxii. 11. shews their hearts to be desperately hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered, nor shall they, God will send a fire upon his cities, upon the cities both of Judah and Israel, not only the head cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of those

two kingdoms, and it shall devour not only the cottages, but the palaces thereof; though never so strong, the fire shall master them; though never so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the King of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah. The fires they both kindled were of his sending, and when he judgeth he will overcome.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter, (1.) God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they had forfeited their title to them; so that they should have no comfort either in receiving them themselves, or offering them to God, ver. 1—5. (2.) He dooms them to utter ruin, for their own sins and the sins of their prophets, ver. 6—8. (3.) He upbraids them with the wickedness of their fathers before them, which they trod in the steps of; ver. 9, 10. (4.) He threatens them with the destruction of their children, and the rooting out of their posterity, ver. 11—17.

1. **R**EJOICE not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn-floor. 2. The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. 3. They shall not dwell in the LORD's land: but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. 4. They shall not offer wine offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD. 5. What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? 6. For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

Here, 1. The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery. *O Israel thou hast gone awhoring from thy God*, ver. 1. Their covenant with God was a marriage-covenant, by which they were joined to him as their God, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour and put a confidence in them, they went awhoring from God as their God; and honoured the pretenders and rivals with that affection, adoration, and confidence, which was due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not in them going awhoring from God, as it was in Israel that had been married to him. Note, the sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God, are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of their going awhoring from God it is charged upon them that *they loved a reward upon every corn-floor*; (1.) They loved to give rewards to their idols, in the offerings and sacrifices they presented to them out of every corn-floor. They took a strange pleasure in serving their idols, with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God, and employ in his service. Note, it is common for those that are niggardly in the expences of their religion, to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or, (2.) They loved to receive rewards from their idols; and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be; *these are my rewards which my lovers have given me*, chap. ii. 12. Note, Those are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry, that love a reward in the corn-floor better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life.

2. They are forbidden to rejoice as other people do. *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy*. Do not expect to rejoice: *What peace, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many?* 2 Kings ix. 19—22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it doth not become thee, but rather to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, Jam. iv. 9. Judah that keeps close to the true God, may and other people that never knew him, nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed as Israel hath that has gone awhoring from him. Some think they had at this time particular occasions for joy, upon the account either of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained, or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had public rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions, but God sends to them not to rejoice. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice because they have gone awhoring from their God; and therefore, (1.) That whatever it was which they rejoiced in, would be no security or advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God, and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have small joy of any of our creature-comforts, if we make not God our chief joy. (2.) The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy, and a strong alloy to all their comforts. Note, Those that by departing from God, have made work for repentance, have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

3. They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before, *Psal. lxxiii. 27. Thou hast destroyed all them that go awhoring from thee*. It is here threatened,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase: *Canaan that fruitful land shall be turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein*. They love the reward in the corn-floor, and are so full of the joy of harvest, that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins; and therefore God will for their eternal humiliation take away from them not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food, ver. 2. *The floor and the wine press shall not feed them*, much less feed them; it shall either be blasted by the hand of God, or plundered by the hand of man; the new wine with which they used to make merry shall fail in her. Note, When we make the world and the things of it our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to shew us our folly and correct us for it. Let them miss of their food in the corn-floor, that look for their reward in the corn-floor. We forfeit the good things of this world if we love them as the best things.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them, and to be a habitation for them: *it shall spue them out*, as it had done the Canaanites before them, ver. 3. *They shall not dwell any longer*

in the LORD's land; the land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner the LORD's land, the land of the Shechemites, to the Canaanites, the land of the LORD of the world, to the Arabic, he who all the earth is, *Psal. xlv. 1. took that for his demeine. The land is mine*, saith God, *Lam. xxi. 3. They had used it or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly enters and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease; it is my land*, saith God, and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off as bad tenants, and be made to know that though they thought themselves free-holders, they were but tenants at will. Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness, that those who go awhoring from God should not be suffered to dwell upon his land; and therefore sooner or later the wicked shall be chased out of the world. Or, it is called the LORD's land, because it was the holy land, *Jerusalem's land*, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were, it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this, it was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go awhoring from him in such a land as this, to deal unjustly in a land of uprightness, *Isa. xvi. 10. And it was a sad and fore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan*. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the LORD's land, that will not be subject to the LORD's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That when they are turned out from the LORD's land they shall have no rest or satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was driven out from the presence of the LORD he was a fugitive and a vagabond ever after, and dwelt in the land of trembling. So Israel here; some shall return into Egypt, the old house of bondage, thither they shall flee from the Assyrians, chap. viii. 13. and they shall lose and ruin themselves, there where they thought to hide and help themselves. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria, and there shall be forced to eat unclean things, either (1.) Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrified: intimating, that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly with husks. Or, (2.) Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable, that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, yet they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that; and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, in eating that which we want or for our health are forced to eat or drink that which is unclean, we must acknowledge that God is righteous, because we have sinned about our food, and have indulged ourselves too much in that which is pleasing.

4. That in the land of their enemies to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God, or obtaining favour with God, by offering any acceptable sacrifices to him; they should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or flow of religion among them; "And so (as Dr. Pococke expresseth it) should be a cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all means of grace; and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people." (1.) They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, or priests to offer them; they shall not be able as offer drink-offerings to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices, (2.) If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are they hearts humbled. (3.) Instead of their sacrifices of joy and praise, they shall eat the bread of mourners, i. e. they shall live desolate and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations and their own miseries, so that if they had opportunity of sacrificing, they should never be themselves in a frame fit for it; for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in their mourning, *Deut. xvi. 13. All that eat of the bread of mourners, are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar*. (1.) Their bread for their soul, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread that they shall have for the support of their lives, shall not come into the house of the Lord, i. e. they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to, or if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought; nor are they rightly disposed to bring it. (5.) The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy and uncomfortable to them, ver. 5. *What will ye do in the solemn day, in the Sabbath, the solemn day of every week, in the new moons, the solemn days of every month, at the return of the times for keeping the Passover, Pentecost, and feast of Tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feast of the Lord*. Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days, and when we are invited to those feasts we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts; *What will you do then?* you will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation, which if it had not been your fault you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it. Note, When we enjoy the means of grace, we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them; if either they should be taken from us, or we be disabled to attend upon them.

5. That they should perish in the land of their dispersion, ver. 6. *For to they are gone out of the LORD's land, where they might have spent both their sabbath days and other days with comfort, gone because of destruction, gone to Egypt, because of the destruction of their own country by the Assyrians, flattering themselves with hopes that they shall return when the storm is over; but those hopes also shall fail them, they shall find there are graves in Egypt, as their murmuring ancestors said, *Exod. xiv. 11. Graves for them, for Egypt shall gather them up, as dead men are gathered up and carried forth to the grave, and Memphis (one of the chief cities of Egypt) shall bury them. Gathering and burying are put together, *Jer. viii. 2. Job xxvii. 19. Those that think presumptuously to outrun the judgments of God, are likely enough to meet their deaths there where they hoped to save their lives***

6. That their land which they left behind, and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolation. As for their tabernacles where they formerly dwelt, and where they kept their stores, the pleasant places for their silver, they shall be demolished, and laid in ruins to that degree that they shall be overgrown with nettles; so that if they should survive the trouble, and return to their own land again, they would find it neither fruitful nor habitable, it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make their money their god reckon the places of their silver their pleasant places, as those that make the Lord their God reckon his tabernacles amiable, and his ordinances their pleasant things, *Isa. lxiv. 11. But while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of chance and change, the pleasant places of men's silver, which were purchased with silver, or in which they deposited their*

silver, or which were beautified and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and therewith all the pleasure men took in them.

7. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. 8. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. 9. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins. 10. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first time: but they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.

For their further awakening it is here threatened,

1. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily; they shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not, it is at the door, *ver. 7. The days of visitation are come*, and there shall be no more delay, *the days of recompence are come*, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them destruction would come, and now it is come, and the time of the divine patience is expired. Note, 1. The day of God's judgment is both a day of visitation in which men's sins are enquired into and brought to light, and a day of recompence, in which men's doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompence is hastening on apace, it is sure, it is near, as if it were already come.

2. That hereby they should be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes *Israel shall know it*, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not by instruction. *Israel shall know* then what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands; when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see. *Israel shall know* the difference between true prophets and false. (1.) They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them they should have peace though they went on, however they pretended to be spiritual men as Ahab's prophets did, *1 Kings xxii. 24.* were fools and madmen, and not true prophets; they deceived themselves and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, *It is for the multitude of thine iniquity*, which in contempt of the divine law thou hast persisted in, and for the great hatred of the true prophets that reproved thee in God's name for it. Note, because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquity bid defiance to it, therefore God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, so strong, as that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them. (2.) They shall know then whether the true prophets that were really spiritual men, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, fools and madmen; and shall be convinced they were so far from being so, that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground, they knew he was established to be a prophet, *1 Sam. iii. 20.* and so here when God fulfils the word of his messengers, by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought Beellam the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the multitude of their iniquities, of that kind, and of their great hatred, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

3. That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves should be manifested to their shame, *ver. 8. The watchmen of Ephraim was with my God*, he had been formerly, they had a set of worthy good ministers that kept close to God and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt, malignant persecuting prophets, that are the ringleaders of all mischief. Or, the watchman of Ephraim now pretends to have been with my God, and prefaceth his lies with, *Thus saith the Lord*, but he is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin, and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men, that he is become hatred itself in the house of his God, or against the house of his God. Note, Wicked prophets are of all other the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast they are watchmen, speculators, and as far as speculation goes they may be right, and with my God, may have their heads full of good notions, but look into their lives, and they are the snare of a fowler in all their ways, catching for themselves, and making a prey of others; look into their hearts, and they are hatred in the house of my God; very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Woe unto thee, O land, unto thee, O church, that hast such watchmen, such prophets that are seers, but not doers! *Corruptio optimi est pessima.*

4. That God would now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers which they trod in the steps of, *ver. 9, 10.*

1. They were as bad as their fathers. *They have deeply corrupted themselves*, they are rooted and riveted in sin, they are far gone in the depths of Satan, *Isa. xxxi. 6.* so that it is next to impossible they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out, it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leopard, and it is their own fault they have corrupted themselves, have polluted and hardened their own hearts; as in the days of Gibeah, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death by the men of Gibeah, and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronised the villainy; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as impudent and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and therefore what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on Gibeah; every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers' sins: *He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*, the iniquity they have by kind and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood; the sin of the fathers shall now be visited upon the children. From hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostasy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness

and base ingratitude, *ver. 10.* Where observe, (1.) The great honour God put upon Israel, when he first formed them into a people, *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*, i. e. he took as much delight and pleasure in them, as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them and least expected them. Or, when they were in the wilderness he found them as grapes, not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were precious in his sight and honourable, *Isa. xliii. 4.* he planted them a choice vine, a right seed, *Jer. ii. 21.* and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. *I saw them with pleasure as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at the first time*, good people are compared to the good things that are first-ripe, *Jer. xxiv. 2.* One then is worth more than many after. This speaks the delight God took in them, and in doing them good; not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully as a man doth the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard. Now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency; but (2.) see the great disgrace they put upon themselves; God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghill deity, *Numb. xxv. 2, 3.* and they separated themselves unto that shame, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if (as should seem) the whoredom, which the people committed with the daughters of Moab, was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God, it will certainly be a shame to them first or last. Their abominations are here said to be as they loved, i. e. their practices which were an abomination to God, were as the best beloved of their souls. Or when they had once forsaken God, they multiplied their abominations, their idols and abominable idolatries at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers, God had done well for them, but they had carried it ungratefully towards him, and in the same manner had the present generation deeply corrupted themselves.

11. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. 12. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them! 13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. 14. Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers. 16. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb. 17. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers, here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions here are which speak that, (1.) They did not hearken to God, *ver. 17.* they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod. They did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear, (2.) Of the wickedness of their doings, *ver. 15.* the downright malice that was in their sins; they were not infirmities, but daring presumptions. How can they but do wickedly who will not hearken to the word of God that would teach and persuade them to do well? And no wonder that there were wicked doings among them, when (3.) Their worship is corrupt, *ver. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal*: which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, *chap. iv. 15.—xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.—v. 5.* And it is probable the idolaters chose that place for their head quarters, because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as *Josh. v. 2—10. 1 Sam. x. 8.—xi. 15.* There where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said, that all their wickedness was, for all other wickedness owed its original to that; corruptions in worship make way for corruptions in morals; the mother of harlots is the mother of all other abominations; *Rev. xvii. 5.* The learned Grotius conjectures that there is a mystical sense here; Golgotha in Syriac is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the greatest sin of the Jewish nation, and of which it might truly be said, all their wickedness was summed up in that. And no wonder the people did wickedly both in worship and in conversation, when (4.) All their princes were revolvers; the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord; or, all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked; they turned aside to sinful ways, and persisted in those ways.

2. The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to shew what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how odious it makes the sinner to him. (1.) He departs from them, *ver. 12.* When they revolt from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them, and withdraw both his protection and his bounty? And well may his threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible, *woe also unto them when I depart from them.* Note, Those are in a woe condition indeed whom God hath forsaken. Our woe or woe depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and if he goes, all woe goes with him, and all woes come upon us. God has forsaken him, persecute and take him. Saul knew this when he laid such an accent upon this part of his complaint, *the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me.* Nay, he doth not only depart from them, but, (2.) He hates them; in Gilgal where all their wickedness is, there I hated them. There where the abominations of sin are committed, there God abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but now that is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them,

them, but (3.) He will leave them no more, will never take them into his favour again: the breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he said, chap. i. 6, 7. *I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, the ten tribes.* (1.) He will discard them and have no more to do with them: *for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house, i. e.* He will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work. Note, Those that profane God's house can expect no other but to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it, or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but (5.) He will drive them far enough, *ver. 17. My God will cast them away*, not only out of his house but out of his sight; he will quite abandon and reject them, they shall be *cast away*. God said he would drive them out of his house, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his master's mind very well, *my God will cast them away*. See with what comfort and pleasure he calls God his God. Note, When others discern God and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God their God, can cheerfully own him, and see themselves owned by him; all revolvers, all ruined, yet God is my God.

3. The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

1. How numerous Ephraim was likely to be; the name Ephraim is derived from *fruitfulness*. Gen. xli. 52. Joseph is a *fruitful bough*, Gen. xlix. 22. And Moses's blessing foretold the *ten thousands of Ephraim*, Deut. xxxiii. 17. this was his glory, *ver. 11.* for this he seemed designed by him that appointed the bounds of men's habitation, *for Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place*, to encourage his increase; which one may expect as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this sense of it, *the congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyrus in prosperity and security.*

2. How few Ephraim should be, *ver. 11. Their glory shall fly away like a bird*, i. e. their children shall be taken away, and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly *as an eagle towards heaven*, swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will fly away; but they that have their God their glory, have in him an unfading, everlasting glory. Ephraim has been as a fruitful tree, but now Ephraim is *smitten*, is blasted, *their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit*, *ver. 16.* If the root be dried the branch must wither of course.

Observe, 1. God's threatening of this judgment, of the destroying of their children. (1.) They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God, *ver. 11.* they shall fly away, *from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception*. Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born, the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin; others of them shall be *still-born*, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there, their mothers death too; of others, their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as untimely fruit. See how easily God can and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind; that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven, it is but doing as he doth by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to fly away from the birth, the womb and the conception, drying up their root that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years. (2.) They shall perish by the hand of their enemies; they shall die violent deaths, *ver. 12. Though they bring up their children to some maturity, though they escape the diseases and deaths which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet will I bereave them*, *ver. 12.* by one judgment or other, so that there shall not be a man left, to build up their families, and bear up their name. Again, *ver. 13. Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer*; the mothers shall travail with pain to bear their children, and a deal of care and pains and cost bestowed upon the nursing of them. And when a cruel enemy comes and puts all to the sword, young and old without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter. Note, It is a great alloy to the comfort parents have in their children, that they know not what they have brought them forth and brought them up for, perhaps for the murderer, or, which is worse, to be themselves the plagues of their generation. It is threatened again, *ver. 16. Though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb*, those children that they are most fond of. Note, The parent's love is no security to the children's lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family, and leave the burdens of it. When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, this mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest which they through unbelief could not enter into; but this here is a total and final rejection; even their children shall all be cut off, and the land shall escheat to the crown, *ob defectum sanguinis*, shall be lost for want of heirs. The Chaldee paraphrase and many of the rabbins, by the murderers to which the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed their children to Moloch, a sin which was its own punishment, which shewed the parents void of bowels, and justly left them void of blessings. (3.) Those few that escape and remain shall be dispersed, *ver. 17.* they shall be wanderers among the nations; so the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

2. The prophet's prayer relating to it, *ver. 14. Give them, O Lord: What shall I give? What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? it is this; since the decree is gone forth that they must either die from the womb, or be brought forth for the murderer; of the two let them rather die from the womb*. Rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable; for the same reason when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, *Blessed is the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck*, Luke xliii. 29. Give therefore a misferrying womb, and dry breasts; for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of man. Note, Those that are childless may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come, when if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.

C H A P. X.

In this chapter, (1.) The people of Israel are charged with gross corruptions in the worship of God, and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars, *ver. 1, 2—5, 6—8.* (2.) They are charged with corruptions in the administration of the civil government, and are threatened with the ruin of that, *ver. 3, 4—7.* (3.) They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting, humbling judgments, *ver. 9—11.* (4.) They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not, *ver. 12—15.*

1. ISRAEL is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. 2. Their heart is divided: now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. 3. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? 4. They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. 5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. 6. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. 7. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. 8. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

Observe, 1. What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge; the national sins which bring down national judgments. The prophet deals plainly with them, for what good would it do them to be flattered?

1. They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began, *ver. 1. Israel is an empty vine*. The church of God is fitly compared to a vine, weak and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful; believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fatness. But this was the character of Israel, they were as an empty vine, a vine that had no sap or virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured. Note, There are many who though they are not become degenerate vines, yet are empty vines; have no good in them. A vine is of all trees least serviceable, if it do not bear fruit. It is therefore good for nothing, *Ezek. xv. 3—5.* And they that bring forth no grapes, will soon come to bring forth wild grapes, that do no good, will do hurt. He is an empty vine, for he bringeth forth fruit to himself. What good there is in him is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of it to himself, and prides himself in it. Christians live not to themselves, *Rom. xiv. 6.* but hypocrites make self their centre; they eat and drink to themselves, *Zech. vii. 5, 6.* Or, Israel is by the judgments of God emptied and spoiled of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lusts, and not to the honour of God who gave it him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may justly expect to be emptied of.

2. They multiplied their altars and images, and the more bountiful God's providence was to them, the more prodigal they were in serving their idols; according to the multitude of his fruit which his land brought forth, he hath increased the altars, and according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images. Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him, the more sins we commit against him; and when the more wealth men have the more mischief they do. Should not we be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing, we should proportionably abound the more in works of piety and charity.

3. Their hearts were divided, *ver. 2.* (1.) They were divided among themselves; they were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another, at variance about their kings, whose separate interests made parties in the kingdom, and in them their very hearts were divided, and alienated one from another, and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them; it follows therefore, *now shall they be found faulty*. Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of much sin, and the prefaces of ruin. (2.) They were divided between God and their idols. They had a remaining affection in their hearts for God, but a reigning affection for their idols; they halted between God and Baal, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the sovereign of the heart, and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all or none. Satan, like the pretended mother, saith, *Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it*; but if that be yielded to, God saith, nay, *let him take all?* A heart thus divided will be found faulty, and be rejected as treacherous in covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and mammon, though it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, yet in the day of discovery it will be found faulty.

4. They made no conscience of what they said, and what they did in the most solemn manner, *ver. 4.* (1.) Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn speaking. They have spoken words, and words only, for they meant not as they said; they did *verba dare*, they swore falsely in making a covenant; they were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reformation, when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God were false to all mankind; they contracted such a habit of treachery, that they broke through the most sacred bonds, and made nothing of them; subjects violated their oaths of allegiance, and their kings their coronation oaths; they broke their leagues with the nations they were in alliance with, nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons. (2.) Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn acting; justice could not take place when men made nothing of forswearing themselves; for thus judgment, which should have been a healing medicinal plant, and of a sweet smell, sprung up as hemlock, which is both nauseous and noxious, in the furrows of the field, in the field that was ploughed and furrowed for good corn. Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man, and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them, as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour. And the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.

2. What the judgments are, with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished.

1. They shall have no joy of their kings and of their government. Be-

justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are intrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be complained of as the burdens of it, *ver. 3.* and they that would not rule their people well should not be able to protect them. *Now they shall say, We have no king, i. e. we are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good, or stand us in any stead, none to keep us from destroying ourselves, or being destroyed by our enemies, none to preserve the public peace, or to fight our battles; and justly is this come to us because we feared not the Lord, when we were safe under the protection of our kings; therefore we are rejected by him, and then what shall a king do for us? What good can we expect from a king; when we have forfeited the favour of our God? Note, Those that cast off the fear of God, are not likely to have joy of any of their creature-comforts; nor will men's loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion, for though that may engage him to be for them, what good will that do them if God be against them? Those that keep themselves in the fear and favour of God, may say with triumph, What can the greatest of men do against us? But those that throw themselves out of his protection must say with despair, What can the greatest of men do for us? He was a king that said, *If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?* Yet he is a fool that saith, if a king cannot help us we must perish, as these intimate here, for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was when they doted upon having a king, but now what can a king do for them who they thought could do any thing? God can make people sick of those creature-comforts which they were most fond of. This is their complaint when their king is disabled to help to them; yet this is not the worst, their civil government shall not only be weakened but quite destroyed; *ver. 7.* As for Samaria, the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, *her king is cut off as the foam from the water.* The foam swims uppermost, and makes a great show upon the face of the water; yet it is but a heap of bubbles raised by the troubling of the water; such were the kings of Israel, after their revolt from the house of David, a mere foam; their government had no foundation; no better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God; when God comes to contend with them by his judgments, he can as easily disperse and dissolve them and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water.*

2. They shall have no joy of their idols, and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of that people, whose god fails them; when their kings do.

1. The idols they had made, and the altars they set up in honour of them, should be broken down and spoiled and carried away as common plunder by the victorious enemy. *He shall break down their altars; God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrian, the Assyrian shall do it by order from God; he shall spoil their images, ver. 2.* What men make idols of, it is just with God to break down and spoil. But the calf at Bethel was the favourite reign idol; that was it which the inhabitants of Samaria doted most upon, now it is here foretold that that should be destroyed: *The glory of it is departed from it, (ver. 5.)* when it is thrown down and defaced, no more to be worshipped; but that is not all, *It shall also be carried to Assyria, (as some think the calf at Dan was some time before) for a present to king Jareb.* It was carried to him as a rich booty, for it was a golden calf, and probably adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers; and as a trophy of victory over their enemies; and what more glorious trophy could they bring than this, or more incontestible proof of an absolute conquest? Thus it is said, *The sin of Israel shall be destroyed, ver. 8. i. e. the idols which they made the matter of their sin; it is said of them, they became a snare to all Israel, 1 Kings xii. 30.* Note, If the grace of God prevail not to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, the high places shall be destroyed; the high places of *Even, i. e. of Bethuren, ver. 5.* or Bethel; it was called the house of God, (so Bethel signifies) but now it is called the house of iniquity; nay iniquity itself. The kings did not as they ought to have done, take away the high places by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war. So that the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars, i. e. they shall lie in ruins. Their altars while they stood were as thorns and thistles, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

2. The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places, shall be the occasion of sorrow and shame and terror to them. (1.) It shall be an occasion of sorrow to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken, the people thereof shall mourn over it. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people that were deluded into the love of it, take on bitterly as Micah did, *Judges xviii. 21. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* The priests that had rejoiced in it shall now mourn for it with the people. Note, Whatever men make a god of, they will mourn for the loss of; an inordinate sorrow for the loss of any worldly good, is a sign we made an idol of it. They used to be very sacred in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them; for sinful men shall sooner or later be turned into mourning. (2.) It shall be an occasion of shame to them, *ver. 6. Ephraim shall receive shame, when he sees the rods he trusted to, carried into captivity, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel, in putting such confidence in them, and paying such adoration to them.* God's ark and altars were never thrown down till the people rejected them; but the idolatrous altars were thrown down when the people were doing on them, which shews that the contempt of the former and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited them. (3.) It shall be an occasion of fear to them, *ver. 5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear; they shall be in pain for their gods, and afraid of losing them: not rather they shall be in pain for themselves and their children and families, when they see the judgments of God breaking in upon them, and beginning with their idols, as he executed judgment against the gods of Egypt, Exod. xii. 12.* Thus idolaters are brought in trembling when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth, *11a. ii. 21.* And here, *ver. 8. They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us; the cupbearers of idolatry, Rev. vi. 15, 16. are brought in calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.*

9. O Israel thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. 10. It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. 11. And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn: but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plough, and Jacob shall break his clods. 12. So to yourselves

in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. 13. Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. 14. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children. 15. So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Here, 1. They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them, *chap. ix. 9.* That they had corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah, and here, *ver. 9. O Israel thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah.* Not only the wickedness that was committed in that age, is revived in this, and reacted a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age hath been continued in a constant series and succession through all the intervening ages down to this; so that the measure of iniquity had been long in filling; and still there had been made additions to it. Or, *Thou hast sinned more than in the days of Gibeah;* so it may be read; the sins of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages. The case was bad then, for there they stood, the criminals stood in their own defence, and the tribes of Israel who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness were at a stand, when both in the first and in the second battle the malefactors were the victors; and the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them till the third engagement, and then did not overtake them all, for six hundred made their escape. But thy sin is worse than their's, and therefore thou canst not expect but that the battle against the children of iniquity should overtake thee, and overcome thee.

2. They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, *ver. 10.* God had hitherto pitied and spared them, though they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience and forbearance, but now it is in my desire that I should chastise them, i. e. it is what I have a purpose of, and will take a pleasure in; he will rejoice over them to do them hurt, *Deut. xxviii. 63.* Note, Because God doth not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he doth desire their chastisement. And for what the chastisement is, *The people shall be gathered against them, as all the other tribes were against Benjamin in the battle of Gibeah.* One of the rabbins thus defects upon it, "Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them; I will chastise them by the hands of the people which shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows;" i. e. when they shall think to fortify themselves as it were within a double entrenchment. Or, *When I shall bind them for their two transgressions,* so the margin reads it, meaning their corporeal and spiritual whoredom, which they are so often charged with, or the two calves at Dan and Bethel; or those two great evils mentioned *Jer. ii. 13.* Or, *When I shall bind them to their two furrows, i. e. bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows up the field and down it, and dare not for fear of the goad stir a step out of them.* The Chaldee saith, "Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows." Thus they that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between God's service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, *2 Chron. xii. 8.*

3. They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, *ver. 11.* See how nice and tender and delicate Ephraim is, he is as an heifer that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work, because being not to be muzzled she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion and its own wages. But saith God, I have a yoke to put upon her fair neck, as fair as it is: I will make Ephraim to ride, i. e. I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon, *Psal. lxxvi. 12.* and Judah too shall be made to plough, and Jacob to break the clods, i. e. they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly, as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean; that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned Dr. Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as speaking the tender gentle methods God took with this people to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience; he had managed them as the husbandman doth his cattle that he trains up for service; Ephraim being as a docile heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of her fair neck, to accustom her to the hand; harnessed her, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her, gave his people Israel a law, that being trained up in his institutions, they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen; he had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, had set Judah to plough, and Jacob to break the clods, and employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them; and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

4. They are invited and encouraged to return to God by prayer, repentance, and reformation, *ver. 12, 13.* See here,

1. The duties they are called to. They are God's husbandry, *1 Cor. iii. 9.* and the duties are expressed in language borrowed from the husbandman's calling; if they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service. (1.) Let them break up the fallow ground; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them, let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed that it may take root. See *Jer. iv. 4.* (2.) Let them sow to themselves in righteousness, i. e. let them return to the practice of good works according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them sow to the spirit, as the apostle speaks, *Gal. vi. 7, 8.* Every action is seed sown, let them sow in righteousness, i. e. let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and they themselves shall have the benefit of it. (3.) Let them seek the Lord, i. e. let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the seed sown. The husbandman must plough and sow with an eye to God, asking of him rain in the season thereof.

2. The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider, (1.)

It is time to do it; it is high time; the husbandman sows in seed-time, and if that time be far spent, he applies himself to it with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God, when it is in a particular manner time to seek him. (2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we *join to ourselves in righteousness*, i. e. if we be careful and diligent to do our duty in a dependence upon his grace, he will shower down his grace upon us, will *rain righteousness*, the very thing that they need most who are to sow in righteousness; for by the grace of God we are what we are. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fullness of time: and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and shall rain righteousness upon us, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold Psalm lxxii. 6. that *he shall come down like rain*. (3.) If we *sow in righteousness* we shall reap in mercy; which agrees with that promise, If we *sow to the Spirit*, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We shall reap according to the measure of mercy, so the word is, it shall be a great reward, according to the riches of mercy; such a reward not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward not of debt but of grace. We reap not in merit, but in mercy. It is what is sown, God giveth a body as it has pleased him. (4.) We have ploughed wickedness and reaped iniquity, and the time past of our life may suffice that we have done so, ver. 13. You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire, and will you grudge to bear the burden and heat of the day in God's service, and in doing that which will be for your own advantage? You have done much to damn your souls, will you not undo it again, and do something to save them? (5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin, and they have reaped iniquity, i. e. they have done the drudgery of sin, and they have carried it on to the harvest, and what the better? it is all a cheat, they have eaten the fruit of lies, i. e. fruit that is but a lie, which looks fair but is rotten within; the works of darkness are unfruitful works, Eph. v. 11. Rom. vi. 21. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. (6.) As our comforts to our confidences in the service of sin will certainly fail us. Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men, i. e. thou hast staid thyself upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plough wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come therefore and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee.

5. They are threatened with utter destruction both for their carnal practices, and for their carnal confidences, ver. 14, 15. Therefore because thou hast sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, a tumult shall arise among thy people; either by insurrections at home, or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion and make a noise, much more both together. (1.) Their cities and strong holds shall be a prey to the enemy; the fortresses which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their riches, shall be seized and spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town or castle, or house (Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel) under military execution; which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons; God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled. (2.) The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel when it was taken, the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children, i. e. they were both dashed in pieces together by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes; *Jussque datum sceleris*. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman, but see what comes of sin; *homo homini lupus*, and then *homo homini agnus*. (3.) Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore, in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off, ver. 15. Heshai was the last king of Israel, in him the whole kingdom was cut off and came to a period; it may refer either to him or to some of his predecessors, that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done in a morning, in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning. Or, at the time appointed, for so the morning comes punctual at its time. Or, in the morning, when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed, by the sudden cutting off of their king, ver. 7. Kings though gods to us are men to God, and shall die like men. And (lastly) what doth all this desolation owe its rise to? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us, ver. 15. So shall Bethel do unto you; Bethel was the place where one of the calves was; Gilgal where all their wickedness is said to have been, was hard by; there was their great wickedness the evil of their evil, so the word is; the sum and quintessence of their sin; and that was it that did this to them, that made all this havoc, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He doth not say, so shall the king of Assyria do to you, but so shall Bethel do to you. Note, Whatever mischief is done to us, it is sin that doth it. Are the fortresses spoiled? Are the women and children murdered? Is the king cut off? It is sin that doth all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all; So shall Bethel do unto you. It is thy own wickedness that corrects thee, and thy backsliding that reprove thee.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The great goodness of God towards the people Israel, and the great things he had done for them, ver. 1—3, 4. (2.) Their ungrateful carriage towards him notwithstanding his favours towards them, ver. 2, 3, 4—7—12. (3.) Threatenings of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery, ver. 5, 6. (4.) Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath, ver. 8, 9. (5.) Promises of what God would yet do for them, ver. 10, 11. (6.) An honourable character given of Judah, ver. 12.

1. WHEN Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. 5. ¶ He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. 6. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their

own counsels. 7. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

Here we find,

1. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more; which they are here, I will not say upbraided with (for God gives and upbraids not) but put in mind of as an aggravation of their sin, and an encouragement to repentance.

(1.) He had a kindness for them when they were young, ver. 1. When Israel was a child, then I loved him; when they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt. God then set his love upon them, and chose them, because he loved them, because he would love them, Deut. vii. 7, 8. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts and children exposed, then God loved them, i. e. he pitied them, and testified his good-will to them, he bore them as the nurse doth the sucking child, nourished them, and fostered their manners. Note, Those that are grown up, say those that are grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

(2.) He delivered them out of the house of bondage; I called my son out of Egypt, because a son, because a beloved son; when God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh, he called them his son, his first-born. Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when upon the death of Herod he and his parents were called out of Egypt, Matt. ii. 15. so that the words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and prophetically of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel, when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his through him out of spiritual slavery.

(3.) He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother or nurse, ver. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go, as a child in leading strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness, God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, shewed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, taking them by the arms; he taught them to go, in the way of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them up that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported, thou hast holden me by my right hand, Psalm lxxiii. 23.

(4.) When any thing was amiss with them, or they were never to little out of order, he was their physician. I healed them. Not only took a tender care of them, a friend may do that, but wrought an effectual cure, it is a God only that can do that; I am the Lord that health thee, Exod. xv. 26. that redress all thy grievances.

(5.) He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods, ver. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love. Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, John vi. 44. He draws, (1.) With the cords of a man, with such cords as men draw with that have a principle of humanity; or such cords as men are drawn with; he dealt with them as men, in an equitable, rational way, in an easy gentle way, with the cords of Adam. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocence, bringing them at once into a paradise, and into covenant with himself. (2.) With bands of love; or cart-ropes of love; this word signifies stronger cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into the service whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, or detain them by violence, but his attractives were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might overcome them with kindness. Moses, whom he made their guide, was the meekest man, in the world. Kindnesses among men we commonly call obligations, or bonds; bonds of love. Thus God draws with the favour of his good countenances, Cant. i. 4. draws with loving-kindness, Jer. xxxi. 3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government, deal rationally, and deal mildly with them.

(6.) He eased them of the burdens they had been long groaning under. I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, alluding to the care of the good husbandman that is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably in those times the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle or headstall over the jaws, which muzzled the mouth of the ox; Israel in Egypt was thus restrained from the enjoyments of their comforts, and constrained to hard labour, but God eased them, removed their shoulder from the burthen, Psalm lxxxi. 6. Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially out of bondage.

(7.) He supplied them with food convenient; in Egypt they fared hard, but when God brought them out, he laid meat unto them, as the husbandman when he has unyoked his cattle foddered them. God rained manna about their camp, bread from heaven, angels food; other creatures seek their meat, but God laid meat to his own people, as we do to our children; was himself their caterer and carver; presented them with the blessings of goodness.

2. Here is Israel very ungrateful to God. 1. They were deaf and disobedient to his voice; he spake to them by his messengers, Moses, and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty, but as they called them, so they went from them; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished; the more pressing and importunate the prophets were with them, to persuade them to that which was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways; disobedience for as soon as they are taught to go, will go from those that call them. 2. They were fond of idols and worshipped them; they sacrificed to Baalim, first one Baal and then another, and burnt incense to graven images, though they were called to by the prophets of the Lord again and again not to do this abominable thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God and of his favours to them. They knew not that I healed them. They looked only at Moses and Aaron the instruments of their relief, and when any thing was amiss quarrelled with them, but looked not through them to God who employed them. Or, understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby healed them; and it was necessary for the perfecting of their cure, else they would have been better reconciled to the methods God took. Note, ignorance is at the bottom of ingratitude, chap. ii. 8.

4. They

4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge, *ver. 7. All people are bent to backsliding from me.* Every word here is aggravating. (1.) They *backslide*. There is no hold of them, no headstrongness in them; they seem to come forwards towards God, but presently they slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow. (2.) They *backslide from me*. from God, the chief good, the fountain of life and living waters: from their God, their owner, ruler, and benefactor; from God who never turned from them, nor was as a wilderness to them. (3.) They are *bent to backslide*; they are *ready to sin*, there is in their nature a propensity to that which is evil; at the best they *hang in suspense* between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close with every temptation. It also intimates, that they are *resolute in sin*, their hearts are fully *set in them to do evil*; the bias is strong that way; and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to stop them: and yet, (4.) They are in profession *my people*, they are *called by my name*, and profess relation to me: they are *mine*, whom I have done much for, and expect much from, whom I have *nourished*, and *brought up as children*, and yet they *backslide from me*. Note, in our repentance we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our *bent to backslide*; not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption. The sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind.

5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformations. Here are two expressions for that, (1.) *They refused to return*, *ver. 5.* so much were they bent to *backslide*, that though they could not but find upon trial the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God they changed for the worse, yet they went on forwardly, *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.* They were *commanded to return*, were *courted and intreated to return*, were promised that if they would they should be kindly received, but they *refused*. (2.) Though they called them to the *most High*, God's prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the *most High God*, from whom they had *fallen* into this wretched degeneracy; they called them from the worship of the idols that were so much *below them*, and the worship of whom was therefore their disparagement, to the true God, that was so much *above them*, and the worship of whom was therefore their preferment; they called them from this earth to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain, *none at all would exalt him*. Though he be the *most high God*, they would not acknowledge him to be so; would do nothing to honour him, nor give him the glory due to his name. Or, they would not *exalt themselves*, would not rise out of that state of apostasy and misery into which they had precipitated themselves; but there they contentedly lay still, would not lift up their heads, nor lift up their souls. Note, God's faithful ministers have taken a great deal of pains to no purpose with backsliding children, have called them to the most High, but none would stir, *none at all would exalt him*.

3. Here is God very angry, and justly so, with Israel; see what are the tokens of God's displeasure with which they are here threatened.

1. God that brought them out of Egypt to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a worse condition than he at first found them in, *ver. 5. He shall not return into the land of Egypt*, though that was a house of bondage grievous enough, but he shall go into a harder service, for *the Assyrians shall be his king*, who will use them worse than ever Pharaoh did. They shall not return into Egypt, which lies near, where they may hear oft from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, that lies much more remote, and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because they *refused to return*. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left, cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost.

2. God that gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable, *ver. 6. the sword shall come upon him*, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them, and triumphing over them. (1.) This judgment shall *spread far*, the sword shall fall upon *his cities*, those nests of people and store-houses of wealth; it shall likewise reach to *his branches*, the country villages, to some; the citizens themselves, to others; or the *bars* (so the word signifies) and gates of their city; or, all the *branches* of their revenue and wealth; or their children the branches of their families. (2.) It shall *last long*. It shall *abide on their cities*. David thought *three months* flying before his enemies, was the only judgment of the three that was to be excepted against, but this *sword* here shall abide much longer than so on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them. (3.) It shall *make a full end*: it shall *consume his branches, and devour them*, and lay all waste, and this *because of their own counsels*, i. e. because they would have their own way, both in worship and conversation, would do as they list, and pursue their own projects, which God therefore in a way of righteous judgment gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God's counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruin them.

8. How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the holy one in the midst of thee, and I will not enter into the city. 10. They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. 11. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, faith the LORD. 12. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the faints.

In these verses we have,

1. God's wonderful *backwardness* to destroy Israel, *ver. 8, 9. How shall I give thee up?* Here observe, (1.) God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case, a debate between justice, and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, O heaven, at this, and wonder, O earth, at the glory of God's goodness? Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating

or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it; but they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to shew what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connection of this with what goes before is very surprising; it was said of Israel, *ver. 7. that they were bent to backslide from God*, that though they were called to him, yet they *would not exalt him*, upon which one would think it should have followed, Now I am determined to destroy them, and never shew them mercy more; no, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness of divine grace, that it follows immediately, *How shall I give thee up?* See here, (1.) The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied; let Ephraim be *given up*, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an incurable patient is given over by his physician. Let him be *given up to ruin*, let Israel be *delivered* into the enemy's hand as a lamb to the lion to be torn in pieces; let them be made as Admah, and set as Zeboim, the two cities that with Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon them; let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation, as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law be executed upon them, that the *whole land shall be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim*, Deut. xxix. 23. Ephraim and Israel deserve to be thus abandoned, and God doth them no wrong if he deal thus with them. (2.) The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals. *How shall I do it?* As the tender father reasons with himself how can I cast off my untoward son? For he is my son though he be untoward; how can I find in my heart to do it? Thus Ephraim has been a dear son, a pleasant child. *How can I do it?* He is ripe for ruin, judgments stand ready to seize him, there wants nothing but *giving him up*, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me, there are yet some good among them, theirs are the children of the covenant, if they be ruined the enemy will triumph; it may be they will yet repent and reform, and therefore how can I do it? Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin that has been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings; *my heart is turned within me*, as we say, our heart *fails us*; when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with us; God speaks as if he were conscious to himself of a strange striving of affections in compassion to Israel, as *Lam. i. 20. My bowels are troubled, my heart is turned within me.* As it follows here, *my repentings are kindled together*, i. e. his bowels yearned towards them, and *his soul was grieved* for their sin and misery, Judg. x. 16. compare Jer. xxxi. 20. *Since I spake against him my bowels are troubled for him.* When God was to give up his son to be a sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour for sinners, he did not say, How shall I give him up? No, he *spared not his own Son*; it *pleased the Lord to bruise him*; and therefore God spared not him that he might spare us: but this is only the language of the day of his patience, but when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it, nay, *I will laugh at their calamity*.

(2.) His gracious determination of this debate. After a long contest, mercy in the issue rejoiceth against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, *ver. 9.* It is decreed the reprieve shall be lengthened out yet longer, and *I will not now execute the fierceness of mine anger* though I am angry; though they shall not go altogether unpunished yet he will mitigate the sentence, and abate the rigour of it. He will shew himself to be *justly* angry, but not *implacably* so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. *I will not return to destroy Ephraim*, i. e. the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not return to destroy, as soldiers when they have pillaged a town once, return a second time to take more, as when *what the palmerworm has left the locust has eaten*. It is added in the close of the verse; *I will not enter into the city*, into Samaria, or any other of their cities; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them and lay them waste, as Admah and Zeboim were.

(3.) The ground and reason of this determination; for *I am God and not man, the holy One of Israel*. To encourage them to hope that they shall find mercy, consider, (1.) What he is in himself; *he is God and not man*, as in other things, so in pardoning sin and sparing sinners; if they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not have born it, his passion would have overpowered his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger; but *I am God and not man*; he is *Lord of his anger*, whereas men's anger commonly lords it over them. If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, knows how to find out an expedient to secure the honour of his justice, and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, *Isa. lv. 9.* Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies, to remember that he is *God, and not man*. He is *the holy one*. One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people; no, God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it; as he is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, and therein declares his righteousness, now Christ has purchased the pardon, and he hath promised it. (2.) What he is to them; he is the *holy one in the midst of thee*, i. e. his holiness is engaged for the good of his church, and even in this corrupt degenerate land and age there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and he required of them all to be *holy as he is*, *1st. xix. 2.* As long as we have the *holy one in the midst of us*, we are safe and well, but woe to us when he leaves us. Note, Those who submit to the influence, may take the comfort of God's holiness.

2. Here is his wonderful *forwardness* to do good for Israel; which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them, *ver. 10, 11. They shall walk after the Lord*. This respects the same favour with that, *chap. iii. 5. They shall return and seek the Lord their God*; it is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment in part in the return of some of them, with those of the two tribes in Ezra's time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the gospel church brought together and incorporated by the gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah; the learned Dr. Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the gospel to the dispersed remnant of Israel the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

(1.) How they were to be called and brought together; *the Lord shall roar like a lion*. The word of the Lord, so saith the Chaldee, shall be as a lion that roars. Christ is called, *the word of the lion of the tribe of Judah*, and his Gospel in the beginning of it was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. When Christ cried with a loud voice, it was as *when a lion roared*, Rev. x. 3. The voice of the Gospel was heard far, as the *roaring of a lion*, and it was a *mighty voice*. See *Joel iii. 16.*

(2.) What

(2.) What impression this call should make upon them, such an impression as the roaring of a lion makes upon all the beasts of the forest; *when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble*; see *Amos* iii. 8. *The lion has roared, i. e. the Lord God hath spoken, and then who will not fear?* When they whose hearts the gospel reached, trembled and were astonished, and cried out, *What shall we do?* When they were by it put upon working out their salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled. *The children shall tremble from the west*; The dispersed Jews were carried eastward to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned came from the east, therefore this seems to have reference to the calling of the Gentiles that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the gospel spread. They shall tremble, i. e. they shall move and come with trembling, with care and haste from the west, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord, *Isa.* ii. 3. to the gospel Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of the gospel. The apostle speaks of *mighty signs and wonders* that were wrought by the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, *Rom.* xv. 19. Then the children trembled from the west. And whereas Israel after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned from thence, *ver.* 11. *They shall tremble, i. e. they shall come trembling and with all haste, as a bird upon the wing out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria*; a dove is noted for swift and constant flight, especially when she flies to her *zinclows*, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the church is here compared to, as it is *Isa.* lx. 8. Wherever they are that belong to the election of grace, east, west, north or south, they shall hear the joyful sound, and be wrought upon by it; they of Egypt and Assyria shall come together, those that lay most remote from each other shall meet in Christ, and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria it was prophesied, *Isa.* xix. 23.

(3.) What effect these impressions should have upon them, being moved with fear, they shall flee to the ark, they shall walk after the Lord; after the service of the Lord, so the Chaldee; they shall take the Lord Christ for their leader and commander, they shall lift themselves under him as the captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the conduct of the Spirit as their guide by the word; they shall leave all to follow Christ as becomes disciples. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will draw us to him, not drive us from him. When he roars like a lion, the slaves tremble and flee from him, the children tremble and flee to him.

(4.) What entertainment they shall meet with at their return, *ver.* 11. *I will place them in their houses, i. e. all those who come at the gospel call, shall have a place and a name in the gospel church, in the particular churches which are their houses, to which they pertain; they shall dwell in God and be at home in him; both easy and safe, as a man in his own house. They shall have mansions, for there are many in our Father's house, in his tabernacle on earth and his temple in heaven, in everlasting habitations, which may be called their houses, for they are the lot they shall stand in at the end of the days.*

3. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong, for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they compass God about with lies and deceit, i. e. all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altars were feigned and hypocritical; when they surrounded him with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they lied to him with their mouth and flattered him with their tongue, their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and yet with these they thought to compass God about, to inclose him as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

4. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they yet held fast; and which comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah which he had not for Israel, *chap.* i. 6, 7. for Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints, or with the most holy. (1.) *Judah rules with God, i. e. he serves God, and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. Judah rules, i. e. the princes and governors of Judah rule with God, i. e. they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest: those rule with God that rule in the fear of God*; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. and it is their honour to do so, and their praise shall be of God, as Judah's here is. Judah is Israel, a prince with God. (2.) *He is faithful with the holy God, keeps close to his worship, and to his saints*; to his priests, to his people: faithful with the saints, i. e. with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They walk in the ways of good men, and those that do so rule with God, they have a mighty interest in heaven. Judah yet doth thus, which intimates that the time would come when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about with lies and deceit, yet it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints, and for those who are thus faithful unto death, is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A high charge drawn up both against Israel and Judah for their sins, which were the ground of God's controversy with them, *ver.* 1, 2. Particularly the sin of fraud and injustice, which Ephraim is charged with, *ver.* 7. and justifies himself in, *ver.* 8. And the sin of idolatry, *ver.* 11. by which God is provoked to contend with them, *ver.* 14. (2.) The aggravations of the sins they are charged with, taken from the honour God put upon their father Jacob, *ver.* 3—5. The advancement of them into a people from low and mean beginnings, *ver.* 12, 13. And the provision he had made them of helps for their souls by the prophets he sent them, *ver.* 10. (3.) A call to the unconverted to turn to God, *ver.* 6. (4.) An intimation of mercy that God had in store for them, *ver.* 9.

1. **E**PHRAIM feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind; he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried into Egypt. 2. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways: according to his doings will be recompence him. 3. ¶ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: 4. Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him: he found

him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us. 5. Even the LORD God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial. 6. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

In these verses,

1. Ephraim is convicted of folly in staying himself upon Egypt and Assyria when he was in straits, *ver.* 1. *Ephraim feedeth on wind, i. e. seeds himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with God*; and when he meets with disappointments yet he pursues the same game, and greedily pants and follows after the east wind, which he cannot catch hold of, nor if he could would it be nourishing, nay, it would be noxious; we say of the wind in the east, it is good neither for man nor beast. It was said, *chap.* viii. he sows the wind, and as he sows, so he reaps the whirlwind; and as he reaps so he feeds on the wind, the east wind. Note, Those that make creatures their confidence make fools of themselves, and take a great deal of pains to put a cheat upon their own souls, and to prepare vexation for themselves. *He daily increaseth lies, i. e. multiplies his correspondence and leagues with his neighbours, which will all prove deceitful to him*; nay, they will prove desolation to him; those very nations that he makes his refuge will prove his ruin. Those that stay themselves upon lies will be still coveting to increase them, that they may build their hopes firm upon them; as if many lies twisted together would make one truth, or many broken reeds and rotten supports one sound one; which is a great delusion and will prove to them a great desolation; for they that observe lying vanities the more they increase them, the more disappointments they prepare for themselves, and the further they run from their own mercies. The men of Ephraim did so when they thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed and sworn to, they make a covenant with the Assyrians, but they will find there is no hold of them; that potent prince will be a slave to his word no longer than he pleaseth. They thought to secure the Egyptians for their confederates by a rich present, of the commodities of their country, not only to purchase their favour, but to shew that their friendship was worth having, oil is carried into Egypt. But the Egyptians when they had got the bribe dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them; *Oleum perdidit & operam*. This was feeding on wind, this was increasing lies and desolation.

2. Judah is contended with too, and Jacob, want includes both Ephraim and Judah, *ver.* 2. *The Lord has also a controversy with Judah, for though he had a while ago ruled with God, and been faithful with the saints, yet now he begins to degenerate*; or though in keeping close to the house of David, and the house of Aaron, and in them to the covenants of royalty and priesthood, they were so far in the right, in the former they ruled with God and in the latter were faithful to the saints, yet upon other accounts God had a controversy with them, and would punish them. Note, Men's being in the right in some things, in the main things, shall not exempt them from correction, and therefore should not exempt them from reproof for those things, wherein they are in the wrong. There were those of the seven churches of Asia which Christ approved of and commended, and yet he adds, *Nevertheless I have something against thee*. So here; though Jacob is a people near to God, yet God will punish him according to the evil ways he was found in, and the evil doings he was found guilty of; for God sees sin even in his own people, and will reckon with them for it.

3. Both Ephraim and Judah are put in mind of their father Jacob, whose seed they were, and whose name they bore, and it was their honour; of the extraordinary things he did, and God did for him; that they might be the more ashamed of themselves, for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor, and staining the lustre of so great a name, and yet that they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, *ver.* 2. threatening to punish them; but how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?

Three glorious things concerning Jacob the person, Jacob the people are here put in mind of; but by brief hints only, for it is presumed they knew the story.

(1.) His struggling with Esau in the womb. There he took his brother by the heel, *ver.* 3. We have the story, *Gen.* xxv. 26. it was an early act of bravery, and an effort of the best precedency, a pious ambition of that birth-right in the covenant, which Esau is justly branded as profane for despising. But his degenerate seed by mingling themselves with the nations, and making leagues with them, profaned that crown, and laid that honour in the dust which he so gloriously put in for. Then it was that the dominion was given him, the elder shall serve the younger; then he was owned of God and his beloved, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, but they had by their sin forfeited both the love of God, and dominion over their neighbours.

(2.) His wrestling with the angel. Remember how your father Jacob had power with God by his own strength, the strength he had by the gift of God, who pleaded not against him by his great power, but put strength into him, *Job* xxiii. 6. The angel he wrestled with is called God, and therefore is supposed to be the Son of God, the Angel of the Covenant. "God" was both a combatant with Jacob, and an assistant of him, shewing in the latter regard greater strength than in the former, fighting as it were against him with his left hand, and for him with his right, and to that putting "greater force." So Dr. Pocock. The providence of God fought against him, when he met with one danger after another in his return homewards, but the grace of God enabled him to go on cheerfully in his way, and when his faith acted upon the divine promise that was for him, prevailed above his fears that arose from the divine providences that were against him, then by his strength he had power with God. But it refers especially to his prayer for deliverance from Esau, and for a blessing, he had power over the angel and prevailed, for he wept and made supplication. Here was a mixture of the greatest courage and the greatest tenderness. Jacob wrestling like a champion, and yet weeping like a child. Note, Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the saints have obtained the most glorious victories. Thus Jacob commenced Israel, a prince with God; his posterity was called Israel, but they were unworthy the name, for they had forfeited and lost their communion with God, and their interest in him, by revolting from their duty to him.

(3.) His meeting with God at Bethel; God found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. God found him the first time in Bethel, as he went to Padan-aram, *Gen.* xxviii. 10. and a second time after his return, *Gen.* xxxv. 9, &c. It is likely this refers to both; for in both God spake to Jacob and renewed the covenant with him, and the prophet might very well say, there he spake with us who are the seed of Jacob, for both times that God spake with Jacob at Bethel, he spake with him concerning his seed, *Gen.* xxviii. 14. thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and *Gen.* xxxv. 12. this land I will give to thy seed; thus God then covenanted with him and his seed after him. Now justly are they upbraided with this; for in that very place which their father Jacob called Bethel, the house of God, in remembrance of the communion he there had with God, did they set up

one of the calves and worshipped it, and so turned that Bethel into a Beth-ven, a house of iniquity. There God spake with them exceeding great and precious promises, which they had despised and lost the benefit of.

Two inferences are here drawn from these stories concerning Jacob, for instruction to his seed.

1. Here is an use of information; from what passed between God and Jacob, we may learn, that *Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts, is the God of Israel*; he was the God of Jacob, and this is his memorial throughout all the generations of the seed of Jacob, ver. 5. the more shame for them who forgot the memorial of their church, deserted the God of their fathers and exchanged a *Lord of hosts* for Baalim. Note, Those only are accounted the people of God that keep up a memorial of God, such memorials of him as he himself hath instituted, by which he makes himself known, and will have us to remember him. Here are two memorials of his, by which he is distinguished from all others, and is to be acknowledged and adored by us. (1.) The former speaks his *existence of himself*. He is Jehovah, much the same with *I am*, the same that *was, and is, and is to come*, infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Jehovah is his memorial, his peculiar name. (2.) The latter speaks his *dominion over all*; he is the *God of hosts*, that has all the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and makes what use he pleases of them. Jacob saw Mahanaim, God's two hosts, about the time that he wrestled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2. and so learned to call God the God of hosts, and transmitted it to us as his memorial. God's names, titles, and attributes, are the memorials of him, there is no need of images to be so. And that which was a revelation of God to one, is his memorial to many, to all generations.

2. Here is an use of exhortation, ver. 6. In this so that Jacob thy father had this communion with the Lord God of hosts, and is this still his memorial? (1.) Then let those that have gone astray from God be converted to him; therefore turn thou to thy God. He that was the God of Jacob, is the God of Israel, is thy God, from him thou hast unjustly and unkindly revolted, therefore turn thou to him by repentance and faith, turn to him as thine, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him. (2.) Then let those that are converted to him, walk with him in holy conversation and godliness; keep mercy and judgment, mercy in relieving and succouring the poor and distressed, judgment in rendering to all their due, be kind to all, do wrong to none. Keep piety and judgment, so it may be read, live righteously and godly, in this present world; be devout and be honest. Do not only practise these occasionally, but be careful and constant, and conscientious in the practice of them. (3.) Let those that walk with God be encouraged to live a life of dependance upon him; wait on thy God continually, with a believing expectation to receive from him all those succours and supplies thou standest in need of. Those that live a life of conformity to God, may live a life of confidence and comfort in him, if it be not their own fault. Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord, and let us persevere in holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the divine power and the influence of the divine favour, looking without anxiety for the dubious event, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even, and that is waiting on God as our God in covenant, and this we must do continually.

7. ¶ He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. 8. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none in iniquity, in me, that were sin. 9. And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. 10. I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity, they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal: yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields. 12. And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. 13. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. 14. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly; therefore shall he leave his blood upon him: and his reproach shall the Lord return unto him.

Here are intermixed in these verses,

1. *Reproofs for sin*. When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that he may demonstrate his own righteousness, he will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to his God and keep judgment, ver. 6. now to show that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry, and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

1. He is here charged with *injustice* against the precepts of the second table, ver. 7, 8. Where observe,

1. What the sin is wherewith he is charged, *He is a merchant*. The margin reads it as a proper name, *He is Canaan*, or a Canaanite, unworthy to be denominated from Jacob and Israel, and worthy to be cast out with a curse from this good land, as the Canaanites were. See Amos ix. 7. But Canaan sometimes signifies a merchant, and therefore most likely to do so here, where Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. Though God had given his people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet he did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandize, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that as well as their husbandry; they sucked the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the fund, Deut. xxxiii. 19. And if they had been fair merchants, it had been no reproach at all to them, but an honour and blessing; but he is such a merchant as the Canaanites were, that were honest only with good looking to, and if they could cheated all they dealt with. Ephraim doth so, he deceives and oppresseth. Note, There is oppression by fraud, as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters, that oppress their subjects, tenants and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity to make them hard bargains, or are rigorous and severe in exacting their debts; Ephraim cheated, (1.) With a great deal of art and cunning; the balances of deceit are in his hand; he useth balances, and delivers his goods by weight and measure as if he would be very exact; but they are balances of deceit, false weights and false measures, and thus under colour of doing right he doth the greatest wrong. Note, God has an eye upon merchants and traders when they are weighing their goods and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully; he observes what balances

they have in their hand, and how they hold them, and though those they deal with may not be aware of that slight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it and knows it. Traders by the wit of man are made mysteries, but it is pity that by the sin of man, they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity. (2.) With a great deal of pleasure and pride; He loveth to oppress. To oppress is bad enough, but to love it is much worse; his conscience doth not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do; if it did though he committed the sin, he could not delight in it; but his corruptions are so strong, and have so triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to oppress; sins for sinning sake, and takes a pleasure in out-witting and over-reaching those who suspect him not.

2. How he justifies himself in this sin, ver. 8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn off or other, wherewith to evade the convictions of the word; Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat; now see what he pleads to the indictment; he doth not deny the charge, or plead not guilty, yet doth not make a penitent confession of it and ask pardon, but insists upon his own justification. Suppose it were so that he did use balances of deceit, yet,

1. He pleads that he had got a good estate. Let the prophet say what he pleased of his deceit, of the sin of it, and the curse of God that attended it, he could not be convinced there was any harm or danger in it, for this he was sure of, that he had thriven in it, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance. Whatever you make of it, I have made a good hand of it. Note, Carnal hearts are often confirmed in a good opinion of their evil ways by their worldly prosperity and success in those ways. But it is a great mistake: every word in what Ephraim saith here speaks his folly. (1.) It is folly to call the riches of this world substance, for they are things that are not, Prov. xiii. 5. (2.) It is folly to think we have them by ourselves, to say, as some read it, I have made myself rich, what substance I have is owing purely to my ingenuity and industry, I have found it, my might and power of my hand has gotten me this wealth. (3.) It is folly to think that what we have is for ourselves. I have found me out substance, as if we had it for our own proper use and behoof, whereas we hold it to use only as stewards. (4.) It is folly to think that riches are things to be gloried in, and to say it with exultation, I am become rich; riches are not the honours of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us, and therefore let not the rich man glory in his riches, Jam. i. 9, 10. (5.) It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way either doth make us innocent or will make us safe, or may make us easy in that way: for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. See Isa. lvii. 10. Prov. i. 32.

2. He pleads that he had kept a good reputation. It is common for sinners, when they are justly reprov'd by their ministers, to appeal to their neighbours, and because they know no ill by them, or will say none, or think well of what the prophets charge them with as ill, fly in the face of their reprovers; In all my labours (saith Ephraim) they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbours.—Ephraim was very secure, for, (1.) All his neighbours knew him to be diligent in his business; they had an eye upon all his labours, and commended him for them, men will praise thee when thou dost well for thyself. (2.) None of them knew him to be deceitful in his business. He played his cards so well, that nobody could say to the contrary but that he played fair. For either, 1. He concealed the fraud, so that none discovered it. Whatever iniquity there is they shall find none; as if no iniquity were displeasing to God, and damning to the soul, but that which is open and scandalous before men. What will it avail us that men shall find no iniquity in us, when God finds a great deal, and will bring every secret work, even secret frauds into judgment. (2.) He excuseth the fraud so that none condemned it. They shall find no iniquity in me that were sin, nothing very bad, nothing but what is very excusable, only some venial sins, sins not worth speaking of, which they think God will make nothing of because they do not. It is a fashionable iniquity, it is customary. It is what every body doth, it is pleasant, it is gainful, and this they think is no iniquity that is sin, no body will think the worse of them for it; but God sees not as men see, he judgeth not as man judgeth.

2. He is here charged with idolatry, against the precepts of the first table, with that iniquity, which is in a special manner vanity, the making and worshipping of images, which are vanities, ver. 11. Surely they are vanity; they do not profit but deceive. Now the prophet mentions two places notorious for idolatry. (1.) Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had been branded for it before, chap. vi. 8. Is there iniquity in Gilead? it is a thing to be admired, it is a thing to be sadly lamented; What! iniquity in Gilead! idolatry there? Gilead was a fruitful pleasant country, pleasant to a proverb, Jer. xvii. 6. and doth it to ill requite the Lord? It was a frontier country, and lay much exposed to the insults of enemies, and therefore stood in special need of the divine protection, what, and yet by iniquity throw itself out of that protection? Is there iniquity in Gilead? yea, (2.) And in Gilgal too, there they sacrifice bullocks, chap. ix. 15. and there their altars which they have set up, either to strange gods in opposition to God himself, or to himself, or to the God of Israel in opposition to his own appointed altar, are as thick as heaps of muck in the furrows of the field that is to be sown, chap. viii. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilead only? So some; is it only in those remote parts of the nation that people are so superstitious, where they border upon other nations? No, they are as bad at Gilgal. In Gilgal God protected Jacob their father (of whom he had been speaking) from the rage of Laban, and will you there commit iniquity?

2. Here are threatenings of wrath for sin. Some make that to be so, ver. 9. I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles as in the days of the appointed time, i. e. I will bring thee into such a condition as Israel was in when they dwelt in tents and wandered for forty years, that was the time appointed in the wilderness. Ephraim forgot that God brought him out of Egypt, and brought him up to be what he was, and was proud of his wealth, and took sinful courses to increase it; and therefore God threatens to bring him to a tabernacle state again, to a poor, mean, desolate, unsettled condition. Note, It is just with God when men have by their sins turned their tents into houses, by his judgments to turn their houses into tents again. However, that is certainly a threatening, ver. 14. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly. See how men are deceived in their opinion of themselves, and how they will one day be undeceived; Ephraim thought there was no iniquity in him that deserved to be called sin, ver. 8. But God tells him there was that in him that was sin, and would be found so, if he did not repent and reform; for, (1.) It was extremely offensive to his God. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly, with his iniquities that are so displeasing, to God, and to him too will be bitterness in the latter end. He was so wilful in sinning against his knowledge and convictions, that any one might see and say he designed no other but to provoke God in the highest degree. (2.) It would certainly be destructive to himself, that cannot be otherwise which provokes God against him, and kindles the fire of his wrath. Therefore, (1.) He shall take away his forfeited life; he shall leave his blood upon him: i. e. he shall not hold him guiltless, but bring upon him that death which

is the wages of sin; his blood shall be upon his own head. (2 Sam. i. 16.) for his own iniquity hath testified against him, and he alone shall bear it. Note, When sinners perish, their blood is left upon them. (2.) He shall take away his forfeited honour; his reproach shall his Lord return upon him; God is his Lord, he had by idolatry and other sins reproached the Lord, and done dishonour to him and to his name and family, and had given occasion to others to reproach him; and now God will return the reproach upon him according to the word he has spoken, that those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Note, Shameful sins shall have shameful punishments. If Ephraim put contempt on his God, he shall be so reduced as that all his neighbours shall look with contempt upon him.

3. Here are memorials for former mercy, which come in to convict them of base ingratitude in revolting from God. Let them blush to remember,

(1.) That God had raised them from meanness. When Ephraim was become rich, and was proud of that, he forgot that which God (that they might not forget it) obliged them every year to acknowledge, Deut. xvi. 5. *A Syrian ready to perish was my father.* But God here puts them in mind of it. ver. 12. Let them remember not only the honours of their father Jacob, was a mighty prince he was with God, ver. 3. (an honour which they had no share in, while they were in rebellion against God) but what a poor servant he was to Laban, which was sufficient to mortify them that were puffed up with the estates they had raised. Jacob fled into Syria from a malicious brother, and there served a covetous uncle for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep, because he had no estate to endow a wife with. Jacob was poor and low, and a fugitive, therefore his posterity ought to be proud. He was a plain man dwelling in tents, and keeping sheep, therefore balances of deceitful became them; he served for a wife that was not a Canaanite as Elan's wives were, therefore it was a shame for them to degenerate into Canaanites, and mingle themselves with the nations. God wonderfully preserved him in his flight, and preserved him in his service, so that he multiplied exceedingly, and from that root in a dry ground sprang an illustrious nation that bare his name, which magnifies the goodness of God both to him and them, and leaves them under the stain of base ingratitude to that God who was their founder and benefactor.

(2.) That God had rescued them from misery; had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery, ver. 13. which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve him, and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods. (1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt on purpose that they might serve him, and by redeeming them out of bondage, acquired a special title to them and to their service. (2.) He preserved them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He preserved them for Pharaoh's rage at the sea, even at the Red-sea, protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them. (3.) He did this by a prophet, i. e. Moses, who though he is called king in *Jeshurun*, Deut. xxxiii. 5. yet what he did for Israel he did as a prophet by direction from God, and by the power of his word; the ensign of his authority was not a royal sceptre, but the rod of God, with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings. Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ, Acts iii. 22. and it is by Christ as a prophet; that we are brought out of the Egypt of sin and Satan by the power of his truth. Now this shews how very unworthy and ungrateful this people were, (1.) In rejecting their God who had brought them out of Egypt, which in the preface to the commandments is particularly a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before him. (2.) In despising and persecuting his prophets, whom they should have loved and valued, and have studied to answer God's end in sending them for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt, and preserved them in the wilderness. Note, The benefit we have had by the word of God greatly aggravates our sin and folly, if we put any slight upon the word of God.

(3.) That God had taken care of their education as they grew up. This instance of God's goodness we have, ver. 10. As by a prophet he delivered them, so, by prophets he still continued to speak to them. Man that is formed out of the earth, is fed out of the earth; so that nation that was formed by prophecy, by prophecy was fed and taught; beginning at Moses and so going on to all the prophets through the several ages of that church, we find that divine revelation was all along their tuition. (1.) They had prophets raised up among themselves, Amos ii. 11. a succession of them, scarce ever without a Spirit of prophecy among them more or less, from Moses to Malachi. (2.) These prophets were seers, they had visions, and dreams, in which God discovered his mind to them immediately, with a full assurance that it was his mind, Numb. xii. 6. (3.) These visions were multiplied, God spake not only once, you twice, but many a time? If one vision was not regarded he sent another. The prophets had variety of visions and frequent repetitions of the same. (4.) God spake to them by the prophets; what the prophets received from the Lord they plainly and faithfully delivered to them. The people at mount Sinai begged that God would speak to them by men like themselves, and he did so. (5.) In speaking to them by the prophets he used similitudes, to make the messages he sent by them both intelligible and more affecting, and more likely to be remembered. The visions they saw were often similitudes, and their discourses were embellished with very apt comparisons. And as God by his prophets, so by his Son he used similitudes, for he opened his mouth in parables. Note, God keeps an account whether we do or no, of the sermons we hear; and those that have long enjoyed the mean of grace and purity, plenty, and power, that have been frequently, faithfully, and familiarly told the mind of God, will have a great deal to answer for another day, if they persist in a course of iniquity.

4. Here are intimations of further mercy, and this remembered too in the midst of sin and wrath, as some understand, ver. 9. *I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt*, that then and there took thee to be my people and have approved myself thy God ever since, in a constant series of merciful providences have yet a kindness for thee as bad as thou art; and I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles, not as in the wilderness, but as in the days of the solemn feast, the feast of tabernacles which was celebrated with great joy, Lev. xxiii. 40. (1.) They shall be made to see by the grace of God, that though they are rich and have found out substance, yet they are but in a tabernacle-state, and have in their worldly wealth no continuing city. (2.) They shall yet have cause to rejoice in God, and have opportunity to do it in public ordinances. The feast of tabernacles was the first solemn feast the Jews kept after their return out of Babylon, Ezra iii. 4. (3.) This, as other promises, was to have its full accomplishment in the grace of the gospel, which provides tabernacles for believers in their way to heaven, and furnisheth them with matter of joy, holy joy, joy in God, such as was in the feast of tabernacles, Zech. xiv. 18, 19.

CHAP. XIII.

The same strings, though generally unpleasing ones, are harped upon in this chapter, that were in those before. People care not to be told either of their sin, or of their danger by sin, and yet it is necessary, and for their good, to be told of both, nor can they better hear of either than from the word of God, and from their faithful ministers while

the sin may be repented of, and the danger prevented. Here, (1.) The people of Israel are reproved and threatened for their idolatry, ver. 1—4. (2.) They are reproved and threatened for their wantonness, pride and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, ver. 5—8. (3.) The ruin that is coming upon them for these and all their other sins, as foretold is very terrible, ver. 12, 13—15, 16. (4.) Those among them that yet retain a respect for their God, are here encouraged to hope that he will yet appear for their relief, though their king and princes, and all their other supports and succours fail them, ver. 9, 10, 11—11.

1. **WHEN** Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. 2. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. 3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. 4. Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation till after the captivity, the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab: and this is the sin which in these verses they are charged with. Observe.

1. The provision that God had made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, ver. 4. God did what was fit to be done to keep them close to himself, what could have been done more? (1.) He made known himself to them as the Lord their God, and took them to be his people in a peculiar manner; both by his word and by his works all along from the land of Egypt, he declared, *I am the Lord thy God*; he told them so from heaven at mount Sinai, that he was the Lord and their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophets and by his providences. (2.) He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other. *Thou shalt know no God but me*, not only shalt not own and worship any other, but shalt not acquaint thyself with any other, nor make the rites and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee. Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those praised who have not known the depths of Satan. (3.) He gave them a good reason for it; there is no saviour besides me. Whatever we take for our God we expect to have for our saviour, i. e. to make us happy here and hereafter; as where we have protection we owe allegiance, so where we have salvation and hope for it, we owe adoration.

2. The honour that Ephraim had while he kept himself clear from idolatry, ver. 1. *While Ephraim spake trembling, &c. with trembling*, i. e. (as Dr. Pocock understands it) while he behaved himself towards God as his father Jacob did, with *weeping and supplications*, and spake not proudly and insolently against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God, and worshipped him in that fear, so long he exalted himself in Israel, i. e. he was very considerable among the tribes, and made a figure; Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, exalted himself and his family; when he spake there was trembling, i. e. all about him stood in awe of him; so some understand it. Note, Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, shall be exalted. When people speak with modesty and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment, and a deference to others, they exalt themselves, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim he soon lost himself, when he offended in Baal he died, i. e. he lost his reputation, his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for all idolatry, when Ephraim forsook God and took to worship images, the state received its death's wound, and was never good for any thing after. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

3. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them, ver. 2. Note they sin more and more; when once he began to offend in Baal the ice was broke and he grew worse and worse: coveted more idols, doted more upon those he had and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them. Note, The way of idolatry, as of the other sins, is down hill, and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God that they sin yet more and more. Let us trace them in their apostacy. (1.) They made them molten images, proud to have gods they could cast into what mould they pleased; probably these were the calves in little, like the silver shrines for Diana, the zealous for the calf-worship carried about with them, it may be images of the gods they worshipped, made on purpose for themselves. (2.) They made them of their silver, and then doubted not of their property in them, when they purchased them with their own money, or made them of their own plate melted down for that purpose. See what cost they put themselves to in the service of their idols, which they honoured with the best they had, and therefore made their molten images of silver. (3.) They made them according to their own understanding, i. e. according to their own fancy; they consulted with themselves what shape they should make it in, and make it accordingly; a god according to the best of their judgment. Or, according to their own likeness, in the form of a man. And when they made their idols men like themselves, in shape, they made themselves rocks and stones like them, in reality; for they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them. (4.) It was all the work of the craftsmen. Their images do not pretend like that of Diana to have come down from Jupiter, Acts xix. 35. no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them, such an idol was such a man's work. See chap. viii. 6. *Isa. xlv. 9, &c.* (5.) Though they were thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, *Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves*. Either the priests, called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people who were not allowed to come so near themselves, called upon the men that sacrificed, i. e. the priests that attended for them to kiss the calves, in their name and stead; because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they to pay their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves yet if they were gods, the worshippers by themselves, or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They kissed the calves in token of the adoration of them, affection for them and allegiance to them as theirs. Thus we are bid to kiss the Son, to take him for our Lord and our God.

4. Threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another, and therefore all they that worshipped images, shall be confounded, especially if Ephraim do

do it, *Psalms* xlvii. 7. Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, *ver.* 3. They promise themselves a great deal of safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols and that their prosperity will thereby be established, but God tells them they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes; this shall be, (1.) As the morning cloud which promises showers of rain to the parched ground. (2.) As the early dew which seems to be an earnest of such showers, but both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was, *chap.* vi. 4. and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them; and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world. (3.) They are as the chaff, light and worthless, and they shall be driven as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, *Psalms* i. 4.—xxxv. 5. Job xxi. 18. Nay, (4.) They are as the smoke noisome and offensive, *see* *Ist.* lxi. 5. and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimneys, that is soon dissipated and disappears, *Psalms* lxxviii. 2. Note, No solid lasting comfort is to be expected any where but in God.

5. ¶ I did know thee in the wilderness in the land of great drought. 6. According to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me, 7. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them. 8. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

We may observe here,

1. The plentiful provision God had made for Israel, and the seasonable supplies he had blessed them with, *ver.* 5. I did know thee in the wilderness, i. e. took cognizance of thy case, and made provision for thee, even in a land of great drought, when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way; see a description of this wilderness, *Deut.* viii. 15. *Jer.* ii. 6. and say, the God that knew them, and owned them and fed them there, was a friend indeed, for he was a friend at need, and an all-sufficient friend, that could victual so vast an army when all ordinary ways of provision were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must all have perished. Note, Help at an exigency is very obliging, and must never be forgotten.

2. Their unworthy, ingrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And *ver.* 6. According to their pasture so were they filled. God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan, they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful preface, it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it; They were filled, and their heart was exalted. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, *Deut.* xxxii. 13, 14, 15. But *Jeshurun* waxed fat and kicked. When the body was stuffed up with plenty; the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the services of it. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. When they were poor and lame in the wilderness, they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God, but when they were replenished and established in Canaan, they began to think they had no further need of him; Their heart was exalted, therefore they have forgotten me. Note, Worldly prosperity when it feeds men's pride makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, Depart from us, *Job* xxi. 17. It is sad, that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to him, should make us unmindful of him, and regardless what we do against him. We ought to know that we live upon God, when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

3. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, *ver.* 7, 8. The judgments threatened, *ver.* 3. spoke the departure of all good from them. The threatenings here go further, and speak the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God that had so much befriended them, now turns to be their enemy, and fights against them which is expressed here very terribly; I will be unto them as a lion, and as a leopard. The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is here taken notice of to be crafty and vigilant, as a leopard by the way will I observe them. As that beast of prey lies in wait by the road-side to catch travellers and devour them, so will God by his judgments watch over them to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good. *Jer.* xlv. 27. No opportunity shall be slipped that may accelerate or aggravate their ruin, *Jer.* v. 6. A leopard shall watch over their cities. A lynx or spotted beast (and such the leopard is) is noted for quick sightedness above any creature (*lynx* *vista*) and so intimates that not only the power but the wisdom of God is engaged against those whom he has a controversy with. Some read it, (and the original will bear it) I will be as a leopard in the way of Assyria. The judgments of God shall surprise them then, when they are going to the Assyrians to seek for protection and help from them. It is added I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved, and thereby exasperated and made more cruel, (2 *Sam.* xvii. 8. *Prov.* xxviii. 15.) which intimates how highly God was provoked, and he would make them feel it; he will rend the caul of their heart. The lion is observed to aim at the heart of the beast he preys upon, and thus will God devour them like a lion. He will send such judgments upon them as shall prey upon their spirits and consume their vitals. Their heart was exalted, *ver.* 6. But God will take an effectual course to bring it down. The wild beast shall tear them; not only God will be as a lion and leopard to them, but the metaphor shall be fulfilled in the letter, for noisome beasts are one of the four fore judgments with which God will destroy a provoking people, *Ezek.* xlv. 15. Now all this teacheth us, (1.) That abused goodness turns into the greatest severity. Those who despise God and affront him, when he is to them as a careful tender shepherd, shall find he will be even to his own flock as the beasts of prey are. Those whom God has in vain endured with much long-suffering, and invited with much affection, in them he will show his wrath, and make them vessels of it, *Rom.* ix. 22. Patientia usque ad iram. (2.) That the judgments of God when they come with commission against impenitent sinners, will be irresistible and very terrible. They will rend the caul of the heart, will fill the soul with confusion,

and tear them in pieces, and we are as unable to grapple with them, as a lamb is to make his part good against a roaring lion; for who knows the power of God's anger; knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us be persuaded to make peace with him, for are we stronger than he?

9. ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. 10. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, give me a king and princes? 11. I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up: his sin is hid. 13. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. 15. ¶ Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up; he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. 16. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

The first of these verses is the summary or contents of all the rest, *ver.* 9. Where we have, (1.) All the blame of Israel's ruin laid upon themselves. O Israel thy perdition is thence; it is of and from thyself; or, it has destroyed thee, O Israel; i. e. All that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee. Note, Willful sinners are self-destroyers; obstinate impenitency is the grossest self-murder. Those that are destroyed of the destroyer have their blood upon their own head, they have destroyed themselves. (2.) All the glory of Israel's relief ascribed to God; but in me is thy help. That is, 1. It might have been; I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but thou wouldst not be healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thine own destruction. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners not only that they did that which tended to their own ruin, but they opposed the offers God made them, and the methods he took with them to have prevented it; I would have gathered them, and they would not. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay, 2. It may yet be; thy case is bad, but it is not desperate: Thou hast destroyed thyself, but come to me and I will help thee. This is a plank thrown out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves; but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves, and therefore might justly be left to perish; that he will help those that had long refused his help. Dr. Pocock gives a different reading and sense of this verse. O Israel, this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help. Presuming upon God and his favour has emboldened thee in those wicked ways which have been thy ruin.

Now in the rest of these verses we may see,

1. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said, *ver.* 10. they rebelled against their God, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God and prospered. Note, Those that rebel against their God destroy themselves, for they make him their enemy for whom they are an unequal match.

(1.) They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves; they are doing that every day which will be remembered against them another day. *Ver.* 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin is hid; i. e. God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him, and reckon with him for it afterwards. Their former sins contributed to their present destruction; for they were laid up in store with God, *Deut.* xxxiii. 34, 35. *Job* xiv. 17. It is laid up in safety and will not be forgotten, nor the evidence against him lost; but it is laid up in secret, it is hid, the sinner himself is not aware of it. It is bound up in God's omniscience, in the sinner's own conscience. Note, The sin of sinners is not forgotten till it is pardoned, but an exact account is kept of it, which will be opened in proper time.

(2.) They make no haste to repent and help themselves, when they are under divine rebukes; and therefore they are their own ruin, because they will not do what they should do towards their own salvation, *ver.* 13. (1.) They are brought into trouble and distress by sin. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him; they shall smart for sin, and so be made sensible of it; they shall be thrown into pains and agonies by it, very sharp and severe, and yet like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these though God corrects him, yet he designs his good. He is chastened that he may not be destroyed. But, (2.) They are not by these forward as they ought to be towards repentance and reformation, which would issue their sorrows in true joy: He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long, as he doth in the place of the breaking forth of children, but being brought to the birth, should struggle to get forth, lest he be still and still born at last. Were the child which the mother is in travail of, capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would choose to stay long in the birth; for the captive exile hatheth to be loose, lest he die in the pit, *Isa.* li. 14. Note, those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers, who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. Those are in danger of miscarrying in conversion, that delay it and will not put forth themselves to speed the work, and bring it to an issue.

(3.) Therefore he is destroyed, because he has done that which would be his certain ruin, and neglected that which would be his only relief. Here is a sad description of the desolation they are doomed to, *ver.* 15, 16. It is here taken for granted, that Ephraim is fruitful among his children, his name signifies fruitfulness. He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country, and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it; but sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness, Joseph was a fruitful bough, but for sin it was blasted. The instrument is an east wind, representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called the wind of the Lord, not only because it

shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by a divine direction: it shall come from the Lord, and do whatever he appoints, and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make. (1.) Was it a rich tribe? the foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, a freezing, blasting wind, and shall dry up the springs and fountains with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth: the invader shall waste the country, and so impoverish the husbandman, shall intercept trade and commerce, and so impoverish the merchant; and let not the great men, whose wealth lies in their rich furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment; for he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth, that lay it up in pleasant vessels, vessels of desire, so the word is, on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction. This is treasure that may be spoiled, and that they may be spoiled of; it is what either moth or rust may corrupt, or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away; but wife and happy they who have laid up their treasure in heaven and in the pleasant things of that world which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise. (2.) Was it a populous tribe and numerous? the enemy shall depopulate it, and make its men few. *Samaria shall become desolate*, without inhabitants. (1.) Those shall be cut off that are the guard and joy of the present generation; the men that bear arms shall bear them to no purpose, for they shall fall by the sword, so that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conqueror, or to take care of the concerns either of the public or of private families. (2.) Those shall be cut off that are the seed and hope of the next generation, that should rise up in the places of those that fall by the sword; the whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore the infants shall be dashed to pieces, in the most cruel and barbarous manner; and which, if possible, yet more inhuman, the women with child shall be ripped up. Thus shall the glory of Samaria flee away from the birth and from the womb, chap. ix. 11. x. 14. See instances of this cruelty, 2 Kings viii. 12. xv. 16. Amos i. 13.

2. Let us now see how God was the help of this self-destroying people, how he was their only help. *Ver. 10. I will be thy king*, to rule and save thee; though they had refused to be his subjects, and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be their king, and would not abandon them. The kindness and care of a good king is to keep his people not only from being ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's king, as he was their king of old. Note. Our case would be sad indeed if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

1. God will be their king when they have no other king; he will protect and save them, when those are cut off and gone that should have been their protectors and saviours. *I will be he* (to *ver. 10.* may be read) He that shall help thee; where is the king that may save thee in all thy cities? that may go in and out before thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power; and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? Where are thy judges, that by administering public justice should preserve the public peace? (for they are righteousness and peace that kiss each other) Where are thy judges that thou hadst such a desire of and such a dependence upon, of whom thou saidst, *Give me a king and princes*? This refers to the foolish wicked desire, (1.) Which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the Theocracy or divine government which they had been under during the time of the Judges, because it looked too mean for them; they rejected Samuel, and in him the Lord, when they said, *Give us a king like the nations*, who was the Lord was their king. (2.) To the desire which the ten tribes had of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute, and bore too hard upon them, and they hoped to mend themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances, (1.) Of men's improvidence for themselves, when they are uneasy with their present lot, they are fond of novelty, and think to mend themselves by a change, but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage by the alteration which they promised themselves. (2.) Of men's impiety towards God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments, and amend them; God gave Israel judges and prophets for their conduct, but they were weary of them, and cried, *Give us a king and princes*. God gave them the house of David, established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, *We have no part in David*, those despise themselves that are not pleased with what God doth for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests providence humoured them; gave them Saul first, and afterwards Jeroboam. And what the better were they for them? Saul was given in anger, given in thunder, 1 Sam. xii. 18, 19. and soon after was taken away in wrath, upon mount Gilboa. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent, and disaffection to the house of David; and God was now about to take that away in wrath, by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, where is thy king? He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days without a king, and without a prince, chap. iii. 5. shalt have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note, (1.) God often gives in anger what we foolishly and inordinately desire; gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails. 2. What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should. 3. What God gives in anger, he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it well, he takes away because we did not use it well. It is the happiness of the saints, that whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnisheth them with matter for praise. To the pure all things are pure. It is the misery of the wicked, that whether God gives or takes, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do that for them which no other king could do if they had one. *Ver. 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave*. Though Israel according to the flesh, be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apostle applies it, 1 Cor. xv. 55. and particularly to the blessed resurrection of believers at the great day, yet not excluding their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life. It is promised, (1.) That the captives shall be delivered, shall be ransomed from the power of the grave. Their deliverance shall be by ransom, and we know who it was that paid their ransom, and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of man that gave his life a ransom for many, *Matth. xx. 28.* It is he that thus redeemed them. Those that upon their repenting and believing are for the sake of Christ's righteousness acquitted from the guilt of sin, and saved from death and hell, which are the wages of sin, are those ransomed of the Lord, that shall, in the great day be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the bands of death to hold them, as it was to hold their Master. (2.) That the conqueror shall be destroyed; O death, I

will be thy plagues. Jesus Christ was the plague and destruction of death and the grave, when by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, and when in his own resurrection he triumphed over the grave: but the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of believers at the great day, when death shall for ever be swallowed up in victory, and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate, *I will*, may as well be rendered *ubi nunc*? Where now is thy plague? And so the apostle took it, O death, where is thy plague, or sting, with which thou hast so long pestered the world? O grave, where is thy victory, or thy destruction, wherewith thou hast destroyed mankind? Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it. And altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his, for repentance shall be hid from his eyes, he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thanks be to God therefore who giveth us the victory.

CHAP. XIV.

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters. Those were generally made up of reproofs for sin and threatenings of wrath, but this is made up of exhortations to repentance and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closeth, for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken were designed to prepare and make way for these; he wounds that he may heal, the Spirit convinceth that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents, and some such there were in Israel at this day, as bad as things were. We have here, (1.) Directions in repenting, what to do and what to say, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) Encouragement to repent taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners, *ver. 4-8.* and the comforts he had treasured up for them, *ver. 5-7.* (3.) A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts, *ver. 9.*

1. O Israel return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. 3. Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Here is, 1. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, *ver. 1.* it is directed to Israel, God's professing people; they are called to return. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church, as well as to the heathen. Thou art Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude and interest: thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary. Let Israel see, (1.) What work he has made for repentance. Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Thou hast stumbled, so some read it. Their idols were their stumbling blocks; thou art fallen from God into sin, fallen off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse. Note, Sin is a fall; and it concerns those that are fallen by sin, to get up again by repentance. (2.) What work he has to do in his repentance. Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou hast a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant whom thou hast an interest in. Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God to return to God; and so to do their first work; return to him from whom thou hast fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return even to the Lord; or, quite home to the Lord; do not only look to him, or take some steps towards him, but make a thorough work of it. The ancient Jews had a saying grounded on this, *repentance is a great thing, for it brings men quite up to the throne of glory.*

2. Necessary instructions given them how to repent. (1.) They must be-think themselves what to say to God, when they come to him. Take with you words. They are not required to bring sacrifices and offerings, but penitent prayers and supplications; the fruit of thy lips, yet up of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbins saith, they must be such words as proceed from what is spoken first in the inner man; the heart must direct to the tongue. We must take good words with us, by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. *Propter rem non facit sequentem.* Note, When we come to God we should consider what we have to say to him, for if we come without an errand, we are likely to go without answer, *Eccl. ix. 10.* What shall we say? We must take with us words from the scripture, take them from the Spirit of grace and supplication, who teacheth us every Abba, Father, and makes an intercession in us. (2.) They must be-think themselves what to do. They must not only take with them words, but must turn to the Lord; inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

Now for their assistance herein, and encouragement, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say; save we may hope to speed with God, when he himself has ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has indited it for us; and no doubt, we shall speed if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us. They are,

1. *Petitioning words.* Two things we are here directed to petition for. (1.) To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord we must say to him, Lord, take away all iniquity. They were now sinning for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray not as Pharaoh, take away this death, but take away this sin. Note, When we are in affliction we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins, than for the removal of our trouble. Take away iniquity, lift it off as a burden we are ready to sink under, or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over. Lord, take it away that it may not appear against us to our confusion and condemnation. Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own. When God pardons sin he pardons all; that great debt, and when we pray against sin we must pray against it all; and not except any. (2.) To be accepted as righteous in God's sight, receive us graciously. Let us have thy favour and love, and have then respect to us and to our performances. Receive our prayer graciously; he well pleased with that good, which by thy grace we are enabled to do. Take good, for the word is; take it to bestow upon us, so the margin reads it; give good. This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity; for till iniquity is taken away, we have no reason to expect any good from God; but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good, removing the objections by taking that out of the way which hindered. Give good; they do not say *what good*, but refer themselves to God, it is not good of the world's showing, but

Psal. iv. 6. but good of God's giving. Give good, that good which we have forfeited, and which thou hast promised, and which the necessity of our case calls for. Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us in our returning to God. Give good, i. e. that good which will make us good, and keep us from returning to iniquity again.

2. *Promising words.* These also are put into their mouths, not to move God, or to oblige him to shew them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note, Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God, should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow.

(1.) *Thanksgiving*; pardon our sins and accept of us, so will we render the calves of our lips. The fruit of our lips, so the LXX, a word they used for burnt-offerings, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The Apostle quotes this phrase, Heb. xiii. 15. and by the fruit of our lips understand the sacrifice of praise to God giving thanks to his name. Note, Praise and thanksgiving is our spiritual sacrifice, and if it come from an upright heart shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, Psal. lxxix. 30, 31. And the sense of our pardon and acceptance with God, will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are received graciously, may and must render the calves of their lips. Poor returns for rich receivings, yet if sincere, more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

(2.) *Amendment of life.* They are taught to promise not only verbal acknowledgments, but a real reformation. And we are taught here, (1.) In our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it, if we do not put it away by forsaking it. (2.) To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sins as we ought to be in our confessions; because deceit lies in generals. (3.) To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves, against our own iniquity, Psal. xviii. 23. The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is giving that glory to another which is due to God only; this they promise they will never do. (1.) By putting that confidence in creatures, which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad; Assur, i. e. Assyria shall not save us. We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress as we have done, chap. v. 13.—vii. 11. viii. 9. we will not contract for it, chap. ii. 1. nor will we confide in it, or depend upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be beholden to the Assyrians for help. They will not trust to their warlike preparations at home, especially not those which they were forbidden to multiply, We will not ride upon horses, i. e. we will not make court to Egypt, for thence they fetched their horses, Deut. xvii. 6. Isa. xxx. 16.—xxxii. 1, 3. When our enemies invade us, we will depend upon our God to succour our infantry, and will be in no care to remount our cavalry. Or, we will not post on horseback for haste, from one creature to another to seek relief, but will take the next way, and the only sure way, by applying ourselves to God, Isa. xxi. 5. Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only for all the good we stand in need of. (2.) Nor will they do it by paying that homage to creatures which is due to God only. We will not say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods. They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god, which is the work of our hands. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is in effect to say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods.

3. *Pleading words* are here put into their mouths, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. We must take our encouragement in prayer not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains itself a great truth, that God takes special care of fatherless children, Psal. lxxviii. 4, 5. So he did in his law, Exod. xxii. 22. So he doth in his providence, Psal. xxvii. 10. It is God's prerogative to help the helpless; in him there is mercy for such, for they are proper objects of mercy; in him they find it, there it is laid up for them, and there they must seek it; seek and ye shall find. It comes in here as a good plea for mercy and grace; and an encouraging one to their faith. (1.) They plead the distress of their state and condition. We are fatherless, orphans, destitute of help. Those may expect to find help in God, that are truly sensible of their helplessness in themselves, and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step towards comfort. If we have not yet boldness to call God Father, yet we look upon ourselves as fatherless without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet to be looked upon by him with compassion. (2.) They plead God's wonted loving kindness to such as were in that condition; with thee the fatherless not only may find, but doth find, and shall find mercy. It is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in returning to God, that it is his glory to father the fatherless, and help the helpless.

4. ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel; they seek God's face, and they shall not seek in vain; God will be sure to meet them in a way of mercy, who return to him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises; as he answered the angel with good words, and comfortable words, Zech. i. 13. If we take with us the foregoing words in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words for our faith to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

1. Do they dread and deprecate God's displeasure, and therefore return to him? He assures them, that upon their submission his anger is turned away from them. This is laid as the ground of all the other favours here promised. I will do so and so, for mine anger is turned away, and thereby a door is opened for all good to flow to them, Isa. xii. 1. Note, Though God is justly and greatly angry with sinners, yet he is not implacable in his anger; it may be turned away, it shall be turned away from those that turn away from their iniquity, God will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to him and to his whole will.

2. Do they pray for the taking away of iniquity? He assures them that he will heal their backslidings, so he promised Jer. iii. 22. Note, Though

backslidings from God are the dangerous diseases and wounds of the soul, yet they are not incurable, for God has graciously promised, that if backsliding sinners will apply themselves to him as their physician, and comply with his methods, he will heal their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their backslidings by pardoning mercy, and their bent to backslide by renewing grace. Their iniquity shall not be their ruin.

3. Do they pray that God will receive them graciously? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, I will love them freely. God had hated them while they went on in sin, chap. ix. 15. But now they return and repent, he loves them; not only ceaseth to be angry with them, but takes a complacency in them, and designs their good. He loves them freely; with an absolute intire love, so some; so that there are no remains of his former displeasure; with a liberal bountiful love, so others; he will be open-handed in his love to them, and will think nothing too much to bestow upon them, or to do for them. Or, with a cheerful, willing love; he will love them without reluctance or renitency. He will not say in the day of thy repentance, how shall I receive thee again? as he said in the day of thine apostasy, how shall I give thee up? Or with an unmerited, preventing love. Whom God loves he loves freely, not because they deserve it, but of his own good pleasure. He loves because he will love, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

4. Do they pray that God will give good? will make them good? In answer to that, behold it is promised, I will be as the dew unto Israel, ver. 5. Observe,

1. What shall be the favour God will bestow upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob, God give thee the dew of heaven, Gen. xxvii. 28. Nay, what they need God will not only give them, but he will himself be that to them, all that which they need; I will be as the dew unto Israel. This speaks spiritual blessings in heavenly things; and it follows upon the healing of their backslidings; for pardoning mercy is always accompanied with renewing grace. Note, To Israelites indeed God himself will be as the dew. He will instruct them, his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew, Deut. xxxii. 2. They shall know more and more of him, for he will come to them as the rain, Hos. vi. 3. He will refresh them with his comforts, so that their souls shall be as a watered garden, Isa. lviii. 11. He will be true to penitents as the dew to Israel, when they were in the wilderness, dew that had manna in it, Exod. xvi. 14. Numb. xi. 9. The graces of the Spirit are the hidden manna, hidden in the dew, God will give them bread from heaven as he did to Israel in the dew; in abundance, John i. 16.

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour which shall be produced in them, the grace thus freely bestowed on them shall not be in vain. Those souls, those Israelites, to whom God is as the dew, on whom his grace distils.

1. They shall be growing. The bad being by the grace of God made good, they shall by the same grace be made better: for grace, wherever it is true, is growing. (1.) They shall grow upwards, and be more flourishing, shall grow as the lily; or as some read it, shall blossom as the rose. The growth of the lily, as that of all bulbous roots, is very quick and speedy; the root of the lily seems lost in the ground all winter, but when it is refreshed with the dews of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so the grace of God improves young converts sometimes very fast. The lily when it is come to its height is a lovely flower, Matth. vi. 24. so grace is the comeliness of the soul, Ezek. xvi. 14. It is the beauty of holiness that is produced by the dew of the morning, Psal. cx. 3. (2.) They shall grow downwards, and be more firm. The lily indeed grows fast, and grows fine, but it soon fades, and is easily plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to Israel, that with the flower of the lily he shall have the root of the cedar; he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon; as the trees of Lebanon, which having taken deep root cannot be plucked up, Amos ix. 15. Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root; which is out of sight. The more we depend upon Christ, and draw sap and virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a principle, and the more steadfast and resolved we are in it, the more we cast forth our roots. (3.) They shall grow round about, ver. 6. His branches shall spread on all sides. And ver. 7. he shall grow as the vine, whose branches extends furthest of any tree. Joseph was to be a fruitful bough, Gen. xlix. 22. When many are added to the church from without, when a hopeful generation riseth up, then Israel's branches spread. When particular believers abound in good works, and increase in the knowledge of God, and in every good gift, then their branches may be said to spread, The inward man renewed day by day.

2. They shall be graceful and acceptable both to God and man. Grace is an amiable thing, and makes those that have it truly amiable. They are here compared to such trees as are pleasant, (1.) To the sight. His beauty shall be as the olive-tree, which is always green; the Lord called thy name a green olive-tree, Jer. xi. 6. Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is and shall be ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when those that believe with the heart make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation; then there beauty is as the olive-tree, Psal. lii. 8. It is a promise to the trees of righteousness that their leaf shall not wither. (2.) To the smell. His smell shall be as Lebanon, ver. 6. and his scent as the wine of Lebanon, ver. 7. This was the praise of their father Jacob, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed, Gen. xxvii. 27. The church is compared to a garden of spices, Cant. iv. 12—14. which all her garments smell of. True believers are acceptable to God, and approved of men; God smells a sweet savour from their spiritual sacrifices, Gen. viii. 21. and they are accepted of the multitude of their brethren. Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name; makes it like precious ointment, Eccles. vii. 1. The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. So the margin reads it; not only their reviving comforts now, but their surviving honours when they are gone, shall be as the wine of Lebanon that has a delicate flavour. Flourishing churches have their faith spoken of throughout the world, Rom. i. 8. and leave their name to be remembered, Psal. xlv. 17. and the memory of flourishing saints is blessed, and shall be so; as theirs who by faith obtained a good report.

3. They shall be fruitful and useful. The church is compared here to the vine and the olive that bring forth useful fruits, to the honour of God and man. Nay, the very shadow of the church shall be agreeable, ver. 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. Under God's shadow, so some; under the shadow of the Messiah, so the Chaldee believers dwell under God's shadow, Psal. xci. 1. and there they are and may be safe and easy; but it is rather, under the shadow of Israel, under the shadow of the church. Note, God's promises pertain to those and those only, that dwell under the church's shadow, that attend on God's ordinances, and adhere to his people. Not that flee to that shadow only for shelter, in a hot gleam, but that dwell under it, Psal. xxvii. 4. We may apply it to particular believers; when a man is effectually brought home to God, all that dwell under his shadow fare the better for it; children, servants, subjects, friends, this day is salvation come to this house. They that dwell under the shadow of this church shall return, their drooping spirits shall return, and they shall be refreshed and comforted; he restoreth my soul, Psal. xxiii. 3. They shall revive as the corn, which when it is sown dies first and then revives and brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24.